

## Introductory Matters

### Perspectives of the book of Acts

- 1) God's historical narrative of His activity through the early Christian church
  - a) Note the accurate details (geography, culture, history)
  - b) Note the objective accounts (failures, arguments, etc.)
  
- 2) A historical drama of transitions
  - a) **Theological:** from the ministry of Jesus in person to the ministry of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through His people.
  - b) **Ethnological:** from a primary focus on Israel as a nation to the various people groups (Gentile nations) and individuals around the globe.
    - i) Note the shift:
      - (1) Pure Jews
      - (2) Half-Jews (Samaritans)
      - (3) Friends of Jews (proselytes; those worshipping as Jews)
      - (4) Pagan Gentiles (those with absolutely no connection with Judaism)
    - ii) There are over 100 individual characters mentioned in the book.  
Individuals do matter to God.
  - c) **Historical:** from an emphasis on Israel ["Israel" used 20x] (synagogue, Temple, priests, sabbath, sacrifices, etc.) to an emphasis on the local church ["church" used 19x] (pastors, deacons, ordinances, Sunday, etc.).
    - i) There are numerous references to an OT Law backdrop.
  - d) **Geographical:** from a focus on Jerusalem to a focus on Antioch.
    - i) One estimate for Paul's travels alone is @ 12,000 miles.
    - ii) The average traveler could cover @ 15-20 miles per day by foot, and @ 100 miles per day by ship.
  - e) **Pneumatological:** from the Spirit being with believers to the Spirit being in believers.
  - f) **Dispensational:** from the dispensation of Law to that of Grace.
  
- 3) A continuing historical account to be read by the recipient of the book of Luke (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3)
  - a) Luke's record of all Jesus began to do and teach is found in Luke.
  - b) Luke's record of all Jesus continues to do and teach is found in Acts.
  - c) Together, Luke and Acts combine to form more than one-fourth of the New Testament.
  
- 4) Chronologically:
  - a) The book covers @ 30 years of history (@ 33-60/62 AD).
  - b) The book was probably written between @ 62-64 AD.

## An Outline of Acts 1-12

- 1) **The Introduction to the book**—1:1-8
  - a) Author: Dr. Luke (1:1; cf. Luke 1:1-4; Col. 4:14)
  - b) Recipient: Theophilus (“friend/lover of/beloved by God”)
  - c) Key verses: 1:1 & 1:8
    - i) Who is doing the work?—1:1
    - ii) Where is the work being done?—1:8
      - (1) Jerusalem—1:9-8:3
      - (2) Judea & Samaria—8:4-12:25
      - (3) Remote parts of the earth—13:1-28:31

- 2) **Jesus’ Ministry in Jerusalem**—1:1-8:3
  - a) PHASE ONE—1:1-2:47
    - i) Jesus prepares His apostles—1:1-26
    - ii) Jesus empowers His apostles—2:1-41
    - iii) Jesus grows His people—2:42-47

<b>PROGRESS REPORT # 1—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—2:47</b>
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- b) PHASE TWO—3:1-8:3
  - i) Jesus works through Peter and John—3:1-4:35

<b>PROGRESS REPORT # 2—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—4:32-35</b>
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- ii) Jesus purifies the church—4:36-5:16

<b>PROGRESS REPORT # 3—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:12-16</b>
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- iii) Jesus protects the church from opposition from without and within—5:17-6:7

<b>PROGRESS REPORT # 4—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:42</b>
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<b>PROGRESS REPORT # 5—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—6:7</b>
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- iv) Jesus takes a martyr home—6:8-8:3

- 3) **Jesus’ Ministry Beyond Jerusalem**—8:4-12:25
  - a) Jesus reaches out to Samaria—8:4-25
  - b) Jesus reaches out to Ethiopia—8:26-40
  - c) Jesus calls the persecuting Saul—9:1-31

**PROGRESS REPORT # 6—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JUDEA, GALILEE, & SAMARIA—9:31**

- d) Jesus reaches out to both Jews and Gentiles—9:32-11:18
- e) Jesus forms a multi-cultural church in Antioch of Syria—11:19-30
- f) Jesus works in persecution—12:1-25

**PROGRESS REPORT # 7—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN CAESAREA AND ANTIOCH—12:24**

## Jesus Prepares His Apostles Acts 1:1-26

- 1) **Jesus prepares His apostles by His presence**—1:3a
  - a) How? *by many convincing proofs* (factual, verifiable evidence to help establish the truth of His physical, bodily resurrection, resulting in a firm conclusion) (cf. Luke 24:13-33, 34, 36-51; 1 Cor. 15:5-7)
  - b) For how long? *forty days* (He appeared to them at repeated intervals during this period) (cf. 13:31)
    - i) This was NOT a 40-day Bible conference.
  
- 2) **Jesus prepares His apostles by His teaching**—1:3b
  - a) *The things concerning the (Messianic) kingdom of God* (cf. 1:3, 6: 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31)
  
- 3) **Jesus prepares His apostles by His commands**—1:4-8
  - a) The earlier meeting: immediate responsibilities—1:4-5
    - i) The situation—1:4a
      - (1) They shared a common meal (lit. “shared salt”)
    - ii) The commands—1:4b
      - (1) Negative: *not to leave Jerusalem*
      - (2) Positive: *to wait for the promise of the Father* (Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 14:16, 26; 15:26)
    - iii) The reasons for the commands—1:5
      - (1) The past: *For John (the Baptist) baptized with water*
      - (2) The future: *But you (plural) will be baptized in the Holy Spirit* (cf. Matt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
        - (a) Within the next 10 days at Pentecost (Acts 2:1)
  - b) The final meeting (on Ascension Day?): a question from the apostles—1:6-8
    - Note the “on the one hand ... on the other hand” construction in 1:6-7.
    - i) Jesus is asked, Will Israel’s kingdom be restored?—1:6 (cf. Is. 2:2-4; 49:5-6; Jer. 31:27-34; Ezek. 37:16-19; Amos 9:11-15; Luke 19:11; 24:21)
      - (1) The question assumes there is no theocratic kingdom at this time.
      - (2) “At this time” is emphatically placed at the start of the sentence.
      - (3) The disciples correctly understood that the promises made to Israel about the restoration of the kingdom under the Messiah were not fulfilled in the fullest sense by the church. (MBC)
    - ii) Jesus rebukes them about the timing, but not the concept—1:7
      - (1) The Father has set the timing in His own sovereign authority. (Bock)
    - iii) Jesus guarantees the Spirit’s power and removes all geographical boundaries for the apostles’ ministry—1:8
      - (1) “To the end of the earth” (cf. Is. 8:9; 48:20; 49:6; 62:11; Acts 13:47) is both geographic and ethnic in scope.
      - (2) See a parallel concept in 1 Thess. 1:6-8.

- 4) **Jesus prepares His apostles by His departure**—1:9-11
- a) How did Jesus depart?—1:9 (cf. 1:2)
    - i) He was lifted up/taken up by the Father to the Father’s right hand. (cf. Luke 24:50-51; Acts 2:33)
    - ii) He was received by a cloud (the Shekinah glory cloud?)
  - b) What was said at His departure?—1:10-11
    - i) The messengers: two men/angels in white clothing (cf. Luke 24:4)
    - ii) The recipients of the message: men of Galilee
    - iii) The two-fold theme of the message: **first**, Jesus will now have a heavenly existence and ministry; **second**, they are assured Jesus will return visibly, physically, and literally to the Mount of Olives.
      - (1) Cf. Zech. 14:4; Mal. 3:1; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; 14:14
      - (2) This contradicts the theory of Preterism which teaches Jesus returns spiritually in 70 AD.
      - (3) If the coming of the King will be something fully tangible in the realm of sense experience, as affirmed by the angels, there remains no sound reason for denying the same reality to the Kingdom which He will bring. (McClain)
- 5) **Jesus prepares His apostles by His replacement of Judas Iscariot**—1:12-26
- a) Through unified prayer—1:12-14
    - i) Where were they?—1:12-13a
      - (1) They are known associates of a recently crucified criminal in a city that is not their own. To return here is courageous obedience to Jesus.
    - ii) Who were they?—1:13b
      - (1) Only Peter, James, and John are seen again in Acts.
    - iii) What were they doing?—1:14
      - (1) *With one accord were continually devoting themselves to prayer.*
        - (a) “With one accord” can be used of both believers and unbelievers (1:14; 2:1 (?), 46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29)
        - (b) **Question:** For what did they pray?
      - (2) Female disciples are clearly mentioned.
      - (3) Jesus’ family (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3)
        - (a) James becomes the pastor in Jerusalem and writes the letter of James. (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7)
        - (b) Judas writes the letter of Jude.
  - b) Through the selection of Matthias—1:15-26
    - i) When did this take place? *And in those days*
      - (1) Sometime in the 10 days between May 16 and May 25, 33 AD.
    - ii) Who was the leader, and to whom does he speak directly?—1:15-16a
      - (1) Peter (who had denied Jesus @ six weeks earlier)
        - (a) He partially fulfills Luke 22:32 and strengthens the brothers.
      - (2) Approximately 120 persons (lit. “names”) listened.

- (a) Includes The Eleven, the women (@ 6), Jesus' family (@ 6), and @ 100 more people.
- (b) This is not the full number of Jesus' disciples. (1 Cor. 15:6)
- (3) Only the male attenders were addressed: *men, brothers*
- iii) What was his message? Go to the Word of God!—1:16b-20
  - (1) The necessity of Scripture: *had to be fulfilled*
  - (2) The inspiration of Scripture: *which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David*
    - (a) Dual authorship is acknowledged.
  - (3) The sufficiency of Scripture: he refers to two imprecatory psalms: Ps. 69:25; 109:8.
- iv) What did he tell them to do?—1:21-26
  - (1) The three necessary requirements for an apostle—1:21-22
    - (a) A male disciple of Jesus
    - (b) A close associate throughout Jesus' ministry
    - (c) A personal witness of the resurrection of Jesus
  - (2) The suggested replacements for an apostle—1:23-26
    - (a) The emphasis on prayer
    - (b) The emphasis on God knowing all things (cf. 15:8)
      - (i) *Kardiognostes* is used.
    - (c) The emphasis on God's ability to make His will known
      - (i) This is the last time lots are mentioned in Scripture.
      - (ii) See Prov. 16:33.
- v) Some argue that the apostles were wrong to add Matthias to their number.
  - (1) There is no indication of anything inappropriate in this account.
  - (2) The apostles are called The Twelve after this (2:14; 6:2).
  - (3) Both Matt. 19:28 and Luke 22:28-30 argue for twelve apostles in relationship with Israel.
  - (4) Paul does not meet both requirements listed in 1:21-22.
  - (5) Paul himself recognizes his unique apostleship. (1 Cor. 15:7-8)
  - (6) Paul never claims to be Judas' replacement.
  - (7) **Question:** why is it that when James the son of Zebedee dies in 12:2 there is no attempt to replace him?

## Jesus Empowers His Apostles

Acts 2:1-41

- 1) **The setting—2:1**
  - a) When? Pentecost (Fiftieth/Feast of Weeks/Harvest/Day of Firstfruits)
    - i) Fifty days after Passover (cf. Lev. 23:15-22)
      - (1) The second of three annual pilgrimage feasts that every adult Jewish male was required to attend in Jerusalem. It was a one-day event.
    - ii) This occurs at 9 AM (cf. 2:15)
  - b) Who?
    - i) The first believers are obedient to Jesus. (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5)
    - ii) Some Greek MSS read, “with one accord”.
  - c) Where? At an unknown house (cf. 2:2)
    - i) A house in Jerusalem has been unearthed with a meeting room measuring 36’ x 21’ or 756 ft<sup>2</sup>, roughly the size of our lower meeting room.
  
- 2) **How did God send the Spirit?—2:2-6, 11**
  - a) The external sound of intense wind, but not actual wind—2:2
    - i) The sound came from heaven
    - ii) The sound filled the whole house
      - (1) Apparently even people outside the house could notice it. (cf. 2:6)
  - b) The external sight of fire, but not actual fire—2:3
    - i) The tongues [*glossa*] like fire appeared
    - ii) The tongues rested on each one of them
      - (1) Both men and women, no one was excluded
  - c) The external sound of diverse actual languages—2:4-6
    - The cause of this was the internal Spirit-filling (not Spirit-baptism) of each one.
    - The audience includes both Jews and Gentile proselytes from around the world. (cf. 2:5, 10)
    - i) They spoke with different known languages [*glossa*] from around the globe (2:4-5)
      - (1) The enablement was the ability to speak, not the capacity to hear. (2:4)
      - (2) These were languages the speaker did not know previously.
      - (3) Luke lists @ 15 ethnic regions, with Jerusalem as the focus. (2:7-11)
    - ii) They spoke with distinct birth-language dialects [*dialektos*] (2:6, 8)
  - d) The content of their speech—2:11
    - i) They were speaking of the mighty deeds/greatnesses [*megaleios*] of God. Cf. Luke 1:49
  - e) A similar event will be repeated later with Gentiles (10:46) and the disciples of John (19:6).
  
- 3) **How did the people react?—2:5-13**
  - a) Initially

- i) All were bewildered/confused—2:5-6
- ii) All were amazed, astonished, and greatly perplexed/confused—2:7, 12
- b) Eventually
  - i) Some derived their own conclusion and mocked/laughed with contempt and scoffing—2:13

4) **What did God mean by these things?**—2:14-36

- This is the first Christian sermon
- a) Peter's message—2:14-36 (Based on four passages: Joel 2; Ps. 16:8-11; 132:11; and 110:1)
  - i) Peter makes a correction in the wrong thinking of the mockers—2:14-15
    - (1) The word “declared” is the same as “utterance” in 2:4.
    - (2) This is a holy day. No serious Jew would already be drunk at the time of prayer on Pentecost.
  - ii) Peter makes the connection—2:16-35
    - (1) With Old Testament prophecy—2:16-21 (Cf. Num. 11:29)
      - (a) A partial fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. (cf. 3:19-23)
      - (b) Joel 2:28-32 will not be completely fulfilled until the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
      - (c) Impacts both sexes and every age and social status
      - (d) 2:21 is the key sentence.
    - (2) With Christ—2:22-35
      - (a) Attested by God's threefold actions—2:22
        - (i) Peter does not hide the face of Jesus' hometown.
        - (ii) Cf. Matt. 12:22-26; 21:14-15
      - (b) Crucified by men in keeping with God's plan—2:23
      - (c) Raised from the dead by God—2:24-32
        - (i) Quotes Ps. 16:8-11; 132:11
        - (ii) “The Christ/Messiah” is clearly “This Jesus” (2:31-32, 36)
      - (d) Ascended and exalted to the Father's right hand—2:33a, 34-36
        - (i) Cf. Dan. 7:13-14
        - (ii) Quotes Ps. 110:1
      - (e) Bestowed the Holy Spirit on man—2:33b
- iii) Peter makes the personal application—2:36
  - Peter's point is that the Lord on whom one calls (2:21, 34) is Jesus.
    - (1) Emphasizes God's sovereignty
    - (2) Emphasizes man's responsibility (**you** is emphatic)
- b) Peter's call for a response—2:37-38a
  - i) The response to the message (2:37)
    - (1) Internally, acute distress: pierced to the heart (cf. John 16:8-11)
      - (a) This is not always positive (cf. Acts 5:33; 7:54)
    - (2) Externally, application question: what should we do?
      - (a) Cf. Luke 3:10; 10:25; 18:18; Acts 16:30
  - ii) Peter's directives (2:38a)

- (1) **Plural:** *Repent (faith) ... for the forgiveness of your sins*
  - (a) Cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 13:38-39; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20
- (2) **Singular:** Identify with Jesus Christ in immersion (baptism) signifying the cleansing from the impurities of sin.
  - (a) Emphasizes Jesus' authority (cf. Acts 8:16; 19:5)
    - (i) But this is not to be misinterpreted as modalism, as Oneness Pentecostals (and others) do today.
  - (b) Openly identify with the Messiah whom you crucified seven weeks ago.
- iii) At least three other interpretations:
  - (1) Baptism is necessary for salvation.
  - (2) The prepositional phrase "for [eis] the forgiveness" could be translated, "because of/on the basis of/with a view to ...." (Used similarly in Matt. 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4.)
  - (3) Baptism, while not accomplishing forgiveness, is so closely associated with forgiveness to be inseparable and can therefore be mentioned together.
- c) Peter's assurance of God's promised response—2:38b-40
  - i) Guaranteed reception of the gift that consists of the Holy Spirit.
    - (1) Cf. Luke 11:13; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:33
  - ii) Recipients of the gift
    - (1) You and your children
    - (2) Those who are far off
      - (a) Jews in distant lands? (cf. Is. 57:19; Dan. 9:7)
      - (b) Jews in future generations?
      - (c) Gentiles? (cf. Acts 22:21; Eph. 2:11-13, 17)
  - iii) Luke gives an abbreviated summary of Peter's words. (2:40)
- d) The result of Spirit-empowered witness—2:41
  - i) People embraced the message.
  - ii) The believers were immersed (baptized).
  - iii) About 3,000 people became part of Jesus' people that day.
    - (1) There is no indication that these people speak in tongues.
    - (2) Note the **specific** numeric progress:
      - (a) 1:14—120
      - (b) 2:31—3,120
      - (c) 4:4—5,000 men
      - (d) 21:20—10's of thousands
    - (3) Note the **broad** numeric progress:
      - (a) 2:47; 6:1, 7; 9:31; 11:21

## Jesus Grows His People Acts 2:42-47

- 1) **Luke's overview of the church's priorities—2:42**
  - a) Their commitment to **authoritative, Biblical teaching**
  - b) Their commitment to **distinct fellowship** characterized by:
    - i) Common meals: probably regular meals
      - (1) This phrase appears to not be attached to the Lord's Supper until @ 100 years later.
    - ii) Common prayers: expressing dependence on God
      - (1) Note the definite article and the plural noun.
      - (2) Both specific prayers (3:1) and spontaneous prayers (4:24-30)
- 2) **Luke's closeup of the church's activities—2:43-47**
  - a) **Fear:** *And fear came upon every soul;* (2:43a)
  - b) **Authentication:** *And many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.* (2:43b)
  - c) **Selfless compassion:** *And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were dividing them up with all, as anyone might have need.* (2:44-45)
    - i) This is not obligatory Christian socialism, communism, or communalism.
  - d) **Godward fellowship and positive reputation with unbelievers:** *And daily devoting themselves with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.* (2:46-47a)
  - e) **Sovereign work of God in salvation:** *And the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved.* (2:47b)

### PROGRESS REPORT # 1—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—2:47

THE LORD WAS DAILY ADDING TO THEIR NUMBER TO WHO WERE BEING SAVED  
(Notice how none of these four activities (2:42) is explicitly evangelistic)

#### Five purposes of Luke's summaries in Acts (Eckhard Schnabel, ZECNT)

- **Historical**—what happened in the early years of the Jerusalem church
- **Literary**—indicates the passage of time
- **Theological**—the continued presence of God's power
- **Ecclesiological**—the essential characteristics of the church
- **Missiological**—the continued growth and expansion of the church

## Jesus Works Through Peter and John

Acts 3:1-4:35

**Note:** This is the beginning of phase two of Jesus' ministry to Jerusalem (see introduction). These events occur @ 33-35 AD. This is recorded as the first miracle associated with the new church in Jerusalem.

- 1) **Jesus works through the sign of healing**—3:1-10
  - a) The location and time of the miracle—3:1
    - i) The early believers did not instantly distance themselves from Judaism when the church was established. It took time. It carries over in chapters 1-7 (@ two years, from April 33 AD – April 35 AD).
    - ii) The afternoon burnt offering sacrifice was at 3 pm. (cf. Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-8)
    - iii) The third (?) of the three (?) daily prayer times was at 3 pm.
      - (1) Some argue for 9 am, noon, and 3 pm based on Ps. 55:17.
      - (2) Some argue for 9 am, 3 pm, and sunset based on some Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus.
      - (3) Some argue for only 9 am and 3 pm based on Dan. 9:21.
  - b) The man's desperate condition—3:2-3; 4:22
    - i) Lifelong, congenital, humanly irreversible, immobility for 40+ years.
      - (1) Grasp this: this man had never learned how to walk.
      - (2) Similarly lame people were healed by Jesus (Matt. 15:30), Philip (Acts 8:6-7), Peter (Acts 9:32-34) and Paul (Acts 14:8-10).
    - ii) A well-known, accomplished, strategic beggar.
      - (1) At one of the primary gates on the east side of the Temple.
        - (a) From the Court of the Women into the Court of Israel.
        - (b) From the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women.
        - (c) \*\*From outside the Temple complex into the Court of the Gentiles.
      - (i) Cf. 3:11
  - c) Peter responds to the man's request—3:4-7
    - i) Peter demands the man's attention—3:4-5
      - (1) Peter gives him his full attention, rather than the uncomfortable disregard to which beggars have often grown accustomed.
    - ii) Peter demonstrates the right priorities and the right authority—3:6
      - (1) The lame beggar does not get what he asked for. He needs Someone of greater value than money.
      - (2) Peter gives the man something of greater value than he asked for. The man can now go and make his own living.
      - (3) Peter does not use the right formula or magic to heal (i.e. using the name of Jesus). He uses the authority granted to him by Jesus.
    - iii) Having grabbed the man's right hand, Peter pulls him up, and an instantaneous, public miracle takes place—3:7

- (1) Note Luke's specific medical details of his feet [*basis*] and ankles [*sphudron*].
  - (2) This would have to include balance and coordination as well.
  - (3) The word "walk" is used 5x for emphasis in 3:6-8, 12.
  - d) The man responds to Peter's command—3:8
    - i) **Proof:** The man does three primary things for the first time in his life: stands up rapidly, walks around, and enters the Temple complex.
    - ii) **Effect:** Having entered the Temple proper, the man does three things: walking, leaping, and praising God. Cf. Is. 35:3-6
  - e) The people react to Jesus' miracle through Peter and John—3:9-10
    - i) The people observe his actions, recognize him from past experiences, and are filled with astonishment and amazement.
    - ii) Being pleasantly surprised by an act of God does not equal saving faith, nor does being positively impressed equal genuine faith.
- 2) **Jesus works through preaching**—3:11-4:4
- a) The audience: Jews in Solomon's Porch/Portico/Colonnade/Stoa who had just witnessed the healing of the crippled man—3:11-12a
  - b) The summary and theme of the sermon: the need to repent for crucifying Jesus the Messiah—3:12b-26
    - It is less "polished" than Peter's sermon on Pentecost a few weeks earlier.
    - The sermon begins and ends with identifying Jesus as God's servant [*pais*]. (3:13, 26) Cf. Isaiah 52:13 in the LXX.
    - Most of the audience would be Jerusalem Jews because everyone else has gone back home by now.
  - i) Who is responsible?—3:12b-16 "*Men of Israel*"
    - (1) For the miracle—3:12b-13
      - (a) Note the unusual activity of God glorifying someone.
    - (2) For the death of Christ—3:14-15
      - (a) The Jews demanded Jesus' death.
      - (b) The Jews rejected Jesus and asked for Barabbas.
      - (c) The Jews killed Jesus.
    - (3) For the miracle—3:16
      - (a) Christ is the source of both the healing and the faith.
  - ii) What does God want you to do?—3:17-26 "*And now, brothers*"
    - (1) Recognizing both human ignorance and God's omniscience—3:17-18
    - (2) Repent and return—3:19-21 (cf. Lam. 5:21)
      - (a) The **immediate** result (3:19a): the wiping away of their sins
      - (b) The **remote** results (3:19b-21): the times of refreshing would come and God would send Jesus the Messiah.
        - (i) Cf. Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:25-27
        - (ii) Jesus is waiting in heaven (cf. Ps. 110:1) until the period of restoration (cf. Matt. 19:28; the Kingdom) is ready to begin.

- (c) This is a legitimate reoffer of the kingdom to Israel. Cf. Matt. 22:1-7.
- (3) Biblical basis—3:22-25
- (a) Quotes the **Law** from Deut. 18:15, 18-19—3:22-23
  - (b) Summarizes the OT **prophets**—3:24
  - (c) Quotes the **Law** from Gen. 22:18; 26:4—3:25
- (4) Summary—3:26
- (a) “First” Cf. Rom. 1:16
- iii) The most important point in this story is not the physical healing of the lame man but the source of the power that brought the healing. (William Marty, MBC)
- iv) Note God the Father’s activity and God the Son’s identity:
- (1) **God the Father’s activity**: glorified His Servant Jesus (13); raised Jesus from the dead (15); fulfilled His promises in the death of Jesus (18); will send times of refreshing (20); appointed Christ (20); spoke about the period of restoration (21); raised up a prophet like Moses (22); made a covenant with Israel (25); raised up His servant (as the Prophet) and sent Him to Israel (26).
  - (2) **God the Son’s identity**: the Servant of God (13, 26); the Holy and Righteous One (14); the Author of life (15); the Christ/Messiah (18, 20); the Prophet (22).
- c) The responses to the sermon—4:1-4
- i) **Negative**: by the liberal Jewish elite—4:1-3
    - Three groups who run the Temple confront Peter and John: priests, the captain [*strategos*] (*Sagan* in Hebrew) of the temple guard, and the Sadducees.
    - The Sadducees: reject any resurrection (Lk. 20:27), reject angels (Ac. 23:8), loyal to Rome, maintain the status quo (“the state in which”), wealthy class, corrupt, resented, accept only the Pentateuch as authoritative.
  - (1) They are greatly agitated by two actions of the apostles—4:2
    - They can’t deny the miracle occurred. (Cf. 4:14)
    - (a) The teaching of the people.
    - (b) The proclamation in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
  - (2) They place Peter and John in custody overnight—4:3
    - (a) Evening is the time between 3 pm and sunset (7-8 pm).
  - ii) **Positive**: by the common people—4:4
    - (1) Many believe the preaching of the Word.
    - (2) The total number of men in the church is now about 5,000.
      - (a) Cf. 1:15; 2:41

3) **Jesus works through persecution—4:5-22**

- This is the first of 14 trial scenes in Acts (4:1-22; 5:17-42; 6:12-7:60; 12:2; 12:3-19; 16:19-40; 17:5-9; 18:12-17; 19:23-20:1; 21:27-22:30a; 22:30b-23:11; 24:1-26; 25:1-12; 25:13-26:32)
  - Trials are suspense-builders in most stories.
- a) The leaders of the persecution—4:5-7
- i) Their identity—4:5-6
    - (1) Generally: the Sanhedrin council—4:5 (cf. 4:15)
      - (a) The rulers—mostly Sadducees
      - (b) The elders—blend of Sadducees and Pharisees
      - (c) The scribes—Law-experts, mostly Pharisees
    - (2) Specific celebrities: the elite dynasty, The Family—4:6
      - (a) Annas—former high priest (6-15 AD)
        - (i) The real power (cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:13)
        - (ii) Appointed by Rome.
      - (b) Caiaphas—current high priest (18-36 AD), son-in-law of Annas
      - (c) John [possibly Jonathan]—son of Annas (36-37 AD)
      - (d) Alexander—unknown
  - ii) Their leading question about the source of Peter and John’s power and authority—4:7
    - (1) Source of power: “By what power [*dunamis*]”—how were you enabled?
    - (2) Source of authority: “in what name [*onoma*]” (cf. 4:10)
    - (3) Note that they do not deny or dispute the healing of the crippled man.
    - (4) They already know the negative answer to their own question: **THEY** (as the Sanhedrin) did not authorize such activity.
    - (5) Their fear is observed in 5:28.
- b) Peter’s response to the religious leaders—4:8-12
- This is Peter’s fourth speech in Acts.
  - i) Peter declares the Son is the Source of their power and authority—4:8-11
    - (1) God the Spirit enables Peter to speak—4:8a
    - (2) God the Son is the Source of the healing—4:8b-10a
      - (a) Peter notes a physical rescue [*sozo*] in v. 9.
      - (b) Peter addresses the real crime and real guilt of sin.
    - (3) God the Father raised the Son—4:10b
    - (4) God the Son is the Source of the healing—4:10c-11
      - (a) Quote from Ps. 118:22
  - ii) Peter declares the Son to be the exclusive Source of this necessary salvation—4:12
    - (1) Peter notes a spiritual rescue [*sozo*]. (cf. 4:9)
    - (2) Peter echoes Jesus words in John 14:6.
- c) The religious leaders’ decision to restrict the apostles’ message—4:13-18
- i) The leaders recognized that, despite Peter and John not being formally educated by Jewish or Greek standards like the elite of the Sanhedrin [*agrammatos* and *idiotes*], they demonstrated candid courage (not

- harshness). This leads to astonishment and a recognition that they were followers of Jesus.—4:13
- (1) This does NOT mean that Christians should avoid higher education.
  - (2) Further understanding of “courage.”
    - (a) Noun [*parresia*]: 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 28:31
    - (b) Verb [*parresiazomai*]: 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:28; 26:26
- ii) They had nothing more to say about the healed man, so they ordered Peter and John out of the council chambers.—4:14-15a
  - iii) The council meets in closed session for “damage control”—4:15b-17
    - (1) How does Luke know what was said? Perhaps Nicodemus (John 3:1; 7:50), Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43), or Saul/Paul (Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-10)?
    - (2) Their concerns are not theological but socially pragmatic.
  - iv) The council attempts to muzzle Peter and John by intimidation—4:18
    - (1) The human authority is attempting to control God’s authority.
- d) Peter and John’s response to the religious leaders—4:19-20
- i) Peter and John hold the Sanhedrin accountable to a Higher Authority—4:19
  - ii) Peter and John freely admit their inability to not stop speaking about what they have seen and heard—4:20
    - (1) Cf. with the Sanhedrin’s inability in 4:16.
    - (2) This is an accusation of an attempt to suppress legitimate testimony (a gag order) from legitimate witnesses. It is an attempt to silence and control the apostles.
  - iii) Principles:
    - (1) Christians should obey the God-ordained government’s authority. (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)
    - (2) Christians should disobey the government when its orders are clearly contrary to God’s Word. (Ex. 1:15-17; Dan. 6:4-10; Luke 20:25; Acts 5:29)
- e) The religious leaders’ inability to deal with the people—4:21-22
- i) The leaders attempt to salvage their respectability with the people with a hollow threat.
    - (1) When religion is imposed, it always does damage to someone.
  - ii) Luke clearly shows how spiritually backwards the Sanhedrin really is.
  - iii) How can the Sanhedrin punish the apostles for an undeniable, miraculous act of mercy?

- 4) **Jesus works through prayer**—4:23-31
- a) They are unified in their prayer—4:23-24a
    - i) Remember: “With one accord” can be used of both believers (1:14; 2:1 (?), 46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25) and unbelievers (7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29)
    - ii) This is the second example of the content of the believers’ prayer (1:24-25).
  - b) They express their adoration to God the Father—4:24b-28
    - i) They acknowledge God the Father as absolute Master [*despotes*] and Creator—4:24 (cf. Luke 2:29; 2 Tim. 2:21; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4; Rev. 6:10)  
(1) Echoes of Exod. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 146:6
    - ii) They acknowledge God the Father’s revelation through the Holy Spirit through David the servant [*pais*]—4:25-26 (cf. Acts 28:25)  
(1) Quote from Ps. 2:1-2 (LXX, Septuagint).
    - iii) They acknowledge God the Father’s sovereignty—4:27-28
      - (1) They consider the Roman political rulers, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel all joined together in opposition to Jesus.
      - (2) The Father anointed [*chrrio*] His holy servant [*pais*] Jesus (the Christ).
      - (3) The Father’s ability (hand) and previous decision (will) determined the events concerning Jesus’ death.
  - c) They express their requests to God the Father—4:29-30
    - Note: the request is not for a stop to the persecution. Nor do they pray for the destruction of God’s enemies, as mentioned in Ps. 2:9.
    - i) Demonstrate justice; look at what the leaders’ have done—*threats*
    - ii) Grant us boldness to speak Your word.
      - (1) They humbly acknowledge themselves as the Master’s (4:24) slaves [*doulos*] (4:29)
    - iii) (Grant) additional signs and wonders to be done through Jesus’ name.
  - d) God the Father answers their prayer—4:31
    - i) God’s presence demonstrated by physical shaking (cf. Exod. 19:18; Ps. 114:7; Isa. 6:4; Acts 16:26)
    - ii) Spirit-enabling
    - iii) Bold speaking of God’s Word

**PROGRESS REPORT # 2—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—4:32-35**

1. THEY WERE SHARING **MATERIAL** THINGS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS
2. THEY WERE SHARING **SPIRITUAL** THINGS WITH NON-BELIEVERS

## Jesus Purifies His Church

Acts 4:36-5:16

- 1) **The gracious gift to the church through Joseph**—4:36-37 (positive)
  - a) The **giver**—Joseph is a Hellenistic/Diaspora Levite from the island of Cyprus (@ 275 miles NW of Jerusalem)
    - i) The apostles exercise authority over Joseph and rename him Barnabas.
    - ii) We will see Barnabas again in 9:27; 11:28-30; 13:2; and 15:2-12.
  - b) The **deliberate gift**—Joseph voluntarily sells his farmland [*agros*] (his primary source of income and status) and generously gives all the money to the church through the apostles (submission).
    - i) A specific example of the general truth in 4:34-35.
    - ii) Apparently, Levites could own land outside the boundaries of Israel. (cf. Num. 18:20, 24) (but see Jer. 1:1; 32:7-9)
  
- 2) **The contamination of the church by sin**—5:1-2 (negative)
  - When God is at work, beware of Satan’s attempts to make counterfeits. This illustrates what R. C. Sproul calls “Lying Donors.”
  - a) The **givers**—Ananias and Sapphira
    - i) Ananias means “Yahweh is gracious” and Sapphira means “beautiful.”
  - b) The **deceitful gift**—they sell some land (cf. 5:3) and give some of the money to the church (pseudo-submission) while pretending they have given all the money.
    - i) Others in the church had sold possessions earlier. (Cf. 2:45; 4:34)
    - ii) They agreed to embezzle part of the sale price. Both would have had to sign, having separate witnesses. She enables his financial fraud.
    - iii) Compare with the sin of Achan in Josh. 7:1-26. Luke uses the same word in Acts 5:2 as was used in the LXX of Josh. 7:1 [same verb aspect of *nosphizo*].
  
- 3) **The purification of the church by God**—5:3-11
  - It is NOT local church discipline.
  - a) God gives Peter knowledge of their deceit—5:3-4
    - i) Peter acknowledges Satan’s influence, but Ananias is still culpable.
      - (1) His attempt to lie to the Spirit was ineffective.
      - (2) This is an attempted invasion of the community of the Spirit by the powers of darkness, by means of Ananias. (Ben Witherington)
    - ii) Peter addresses the issue of giving freely to the church.
      - (1) They were not required to sell the land.
      - (2) They were not required to give any of the money to the church.
    - iii) Peter acknowledges the Holy Spirit as being God.
  - b) How does God purify the church?—5:5-10
    - i) With Ananias—5:5-6

- (1) Peter does not utter a word of judgment, nor do his words condemn Ananias to death, nor does he express a wish that he would die. (Eckhard Schnabel)
- (2) Cf. 5:5, 10-11; 12:23
- (3) Even after a shocking death, his corpse is treated with respect but without ceremony.
- ii) With Sapphira—5:7-10
  - (1) Peter gives her the opportunity to tell the truth—5:7-8
  - (2) Peter addresses her sin and announces her punishment—5:9-10
    - (a) They have arrogantly conspired [*sumphoneo*] against the Holy Spirit. They thought they could effectively deceive the Spirit of God!
    - (b) Her involuntary submission to Peter is contrasted with their earlier voluntary pseudo-submission. (cf. 5:2)
- c) God produces fear in the hearts of the people—5:11
  - i) In the hearts of church members
    - (1) Use of “church” [*ekklesia*] in Acts:
      - (a) Believers: 2:47 (?); 5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17, 28
      - (b) Unbelievers: 7:38; 19:32, 39, 41
  - ii) In the hearts of all who hear about the event

**PROGRESS REPORT # 3—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:12-16**

1. SIGNS AND WONDERS ARE TAKING PLACE AMONG THE PEOPLE
2. THE BELIEVERS ARE OF ONE MIND
3. SOME UNBELIEVERS WILL NOT ASSOCIATE WITH THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THE DEATH OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, BUT THEY STILL RESPECT THE BELIEVERS
4. MULTITUDES OF BELIEVERS ARE CONSTANTLY BEING ADDED TO THE ORIGINAL NUMBER
5. MANY SICK PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TO THE JERUSALEM TO BE HEALED

## Jesus Protects His Church From Opposition From Without And Within

Acts 5:17-6:7

- 1) **Jesus protects the apostles in prison**—5:17-41
  - a) Despite the opposition from ungodly religious leaders—5:17-26
    - i) The opposition described—5:17-18
      - (1) Their identity: upper-level Sadducean priests who are jealousy-filled—5:17
        - (a) This is a religiously motivated rage. (NET)
          - (i) They have the most to lose theologically and politically.
        - (b) The irony of being *jealousy-filled* instead of *Spirit-filled*.
        - (c) The “sect/party/school” [*hairesis*]
          - **Negative:** Divisions among Christians: Gal. 5:20; Heresies: 2 Pet. 2:1
          - **Neutral:** Sadducees: Acts 5:17; Pharisees: Acts 15:5; 26:5; Christians: 24:5, 14; 28:22
          - **Positive:** Divisions among Christians: 1 Cor. 11:19
      - (2) Their deliberate publicity: public arrest, public jail
    - ii) God’s opposition to the opposition’s arrest (5:18) and censorship (cf. 4:16-18)—5:19-20
      - (1) “An angel of the Lord” not “the angel of the Lord.”
        - (a) The irony of deliverance by an angel from the jail of those who don’t believe in angels.
        - (2) Note the description of the Gospel: *the whole message of this Life*.
        - (3) This is the first of three jail miracles: (apostles) 5:19; (Peter) 12:6-10; (Paul & Silas) 16:26-27
          - (a) Sometimes God rescues from prison and other times He does not.
    - iii) The fearful perplexity and ignorance of the opposition—5:21-26
      - (1) The humorous re-arrest of the obedient apostles.
      - (2) The jail doors were re-locked (by the angel?) and remained under guard. (cf. 5:19, 23)
      - (3) The apostles do not resist the unjust arrest.
      - (4) Imagine the perplexity of those who don’t believe in divine intervention.
  - b) The discussion between the religious leaders and the apostles—5:27-32
    - i) The official situation—5:27
      - (1) Note that nothing will be said about the escape from jail.
    - ii) The official accurate evaluation of God’s work through the apostles—5:28
      - (1) Past: You have disobeyed our orders.
      - (2) Past: “*You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.*”
      - (3) Future: “*You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.*” (cf. Mt. 27:25)
    - iii) The bold response by the apostles—5:29-32
      - (1) They have a necessity to obey God—5:29 (cf. 4:19-20)
      - (2) They preach the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ—5:30

- (3) They explain the purpose of the exaltation of Christ—5:31
  - (a) To grant repentance to Israel
  - (b) To grant forgiveness of sins
- (4) They are co-witnesses of Christ with the Holy Spirit—5:32
  - (a) Cf. Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16
- c) The pragmatic advice of the respected Pharisee Gamaliel—5:33-39 (cf. 22:3)
  - i) The enraged intention of execution—5:33
  - ii) The authoritative, pragmatic counsel of Gamaliel—5:34-39
    - Note the absence of Scripture in Gamaliel's speech.
    - (1) Caution—5:35
    - (2) Remember two examples from history—5:36-37
    - (3) Third class condition (less probable)—5:38
    - (4) First class condition (assumed true for sake of argument)—5:39
- d) The response of the religious leaders—5:40
  - i) They attempt to intimidate and humiliate (stripped and probably flogged) the apostles
    - (1) Normally 13 lashes on the chest, 26 lashes on the back. (cf. Dt. 25:3; 2 Cor. 11:24)
  - ii) They command the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus
- e) The courageous response by the apostles—5:41
  - i) They rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.
  - ii) Cf. Luke 6:22-23; 1 Pet. 4:12-16

**PROGRESS REPORT # 4—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:42**

- **Publicly:** THEY DO NOT CEASE TEACHING [*didasko*] AND PREACHING TO UNBELIEVERS [*euangelizo*] JESUS AS THE CHRIST EVERY DAY IN THE TEMPLE
- **Privately:** THEY DO NOT CEASE TEACHING [*didasko*] AND PREACHING TO UNBELIEVERS [*euangelizo*] JESUS AS THE CHRIST EVERY DAY IN EVERY HOUSE

- 2) **Jesus protects the church from division—6:1-6**
  - a) The initial problem—6:1
    - i) Greek-culture-influenced (Hellenists), Jewish-Christian widows were being neglected compared with Jewish-culture-influenced (native Hebrews), Jewish-Christian widows as the various needs were being care for. (cf. 2:44-45; 4:32-5:11)
      - (1) This is more than a simple language issue.
    - ii) This appears to be a *perceived* neglect marked by discontent, not an *intentional* one. It is understandable, however, considering the recent numeric growth.
  - b) Jesus protects the church through wise church leadership—6:2-4
    - The balance of leadership authority and congregational responsibility
    - i) They authoritatively summon the church together—6:2

- (1) Note that Luke identifies them as *The Twelve*, embracing the earlier choice of Matthias in 1:26. They had previously been identified by Luke as *The Eleven* (cf. Luke 24:9, 33; Acts 1:26; 2:14).
- (2) Observations:
  - (a) They do not ignore the problem, hoping it will simply go away.
  - (b) They do not attempt to assign blame to anyone.
  - (c) They do not attempt to do everything by themselves.
  - (d) They explain their desire (negative & positive) to delegate priorities.
- ii) They wisely suggest a course of action for the church to follow—6:3
  - (1) The **responsibility** of the church: the command to carefully *select*
    - (a) They do not expose the process to volunteers.
    - (b) Cf. Deut. 1:13
  - (2) The **membership** of the candidates: *from among you*
    - (a) It was a gathering of the congregation of the disciples/brothers.
  - (3) The **number** of candidates: *seven*
    - (a) Jewish town councils often had seven members.
  - (4) The **sex** of the candidates: *men* [*aner*]
  - (5) The **qualifications** of the candidates: godly and skillful: *of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom*
  - (6) The **accountability** of the candidates: *whom we may put in charge*
  - (7) The **limited responsibility** of the candidates: *in charge of this need*
    - (a) Limited in both scope and time
- iii) They devotedly maintain the proper sequence of their God-centered priorities—6:4
  - (1) Devoted to the prayer to God. (cf. 2:42; 3:1;
  - (2) Devoted to the ministry of God's Word. (cf. 6:2)
    - (a) Reflected in James teaching in 15:13-21.
- c) The church's responsible selection—6:5-6
  - i) They followed the instructions of the church's leadership.
    - (1) There is no indication of how this selection took place.
  - ii) They choose seven males with Greek names, implying they are Hellenistic in background. Six of the seven were Jewish Christians.
    - (1) Only the first two, Stephen and Philip, are mentioned later in Acts.
  - iii) While the congregation chose the seven men, the leaders officially authorized them.
- d) Additional observations:
  - i) These are not officially deacons. This office only appears later in 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 12, 13 and Phil. 1:1.
  - ii) There is no requirement that all churches must have seven deacons.
  - iii) Note the two-fold use of serving: *serve* [*diakoneo*] tables (6:2) and the *service* [*diakonia*] of the Word (6:4). Both can be genuine service to God and other believers.

- iv) Note the two-fold use of desires: *pleasing* [*arestos*] (6:2) and *pleased* [*aresko*] (6:5).

**PROGRESS REPORT # 5—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—ACTS 6:7**

(summarized with three imperfect aspect verbs)

- THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD KEEPS ON SPREADING
- THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES KEEPS ON INCREASES GREATLY IN JERUSALEM
- A GREAT MANY OF THE PRIESTS ARE BECOMING OBEDIENT [*hupakouo*] TO THE FAITH  
(Jeremias estimated there were @ 8,000 priests and @ 10,000 Levites during this time, divided into 24 groups that rotated every 2 weeks throughout the year.)

## Jesus Takes A Martyr Home

Acts 6:8-8:3

- This is the last episode regarding the church in Jerusalem.
- 1) **The arrest of God's witness—6:8-7:1**
    - a) How does Luke describe Stephen?
      - i) He is full of grace and power—6:8a (cf. 6:3, 5)
        - (1) Five-fold fullness of Stephen: the Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace, power
      - ii) He does great wonders and signs—6:8b
        - (1) For the first time, someone other than The Twelve is doing miracles.
      - iii) He speaks with wisdom and the Spirit—6:10
      - iv) His face appears as the face of an angel—6:15
    - b) How does Luke describe Stephen's opponents?
      - i) The men from the Diasporan/Hellenistic synagogue(s) (1-5 synagogues) argue with him—6:9 (cf. Acts 24:12)
      - ii) They are incapable of resisting what and how he is speaking—6:10
      - iii) They secretly persuade certain men to distort the words of Jesus and Stephen—6:11, 13
        - (1) Cf. Mark 14:58
      - iv) They stir up the religious leaders against him—6:12
        - (1) This is the third of four times Christians stand before the Sanhedrin: 4:15 (Peter & John); 5:27 (The Twelve); 6:12 (Stephen); 22:30 (Paul).
        - (2) The three-fold charges against him include: disrespecting Moses and God, speaking against the Temple and the Law, promising destruction of the Temple and changing Jewish customs.
      - v) They stare at him, seeing something like the face of an angel—6:15
      - vi) The high priest (Caiaphas?) asks him to comment on the accuracy of the charges—7:1
  - 2) **The message of God's witness—7:2-53**
    - This is the longest recorded sermon in Acts with 1,014 words in the Greek NT.
    - Stephen does not defend himself, but rather selectively recounts God's work in Israel.
    - This seems to take place @ two years after Jesus' ascension. [@ April 35 AD]
    - a) God's work in the past—7:1-50
      - Note his use of the Law of Moses (despite the false charges)
      - i) God dealt with Israel through **ABRAHAM**—7:1-8 [Gen. 11-13, 15, 17]
        - (1) The God of the glory—7:2 (cf. Ps. 29:3)
        - (2) The God of the promise—7:3-8
      - ii) God dealt with Israel through **JOSEPH**—7:9-16 [Gen. 37-50]
        - (1) God was with Joseph, rescued him, granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, and appointed him governor over Egypt—7:9-10

- (2) Delivered Jacob's family through Joseph—7:11-16
    - Some have taken issue with Stephen's "inaccuracies."
    - (a) **Chronology**: his use of 400 years instead of 430 (7:6)
      - (i) Cf. Gen. 15:13-16; Gal. 3:17
      - (ii) From the last promise of Jacob in Gen. 46:1-4 to the Exodus was 400 years.
    - (b) **Numbers**: his use of 75 instead of 70 (7:14)
      - (i) Cf. Gen. 46:27 and Exo. 1:5 (Greek OT) with Deut. 10:22 (Hebrew OT).
    - (c) **History**: his statement regarding the tomb purchased from the sons of Hamor. (7:16)
      - (i) Cf. Gen. 33:19; Josh. 24:32
  - iii) God dealt with Israel through **MOSES**—7:17-43 [Exod. 1-3, 19-32]
    - (1) God kept His promise to Abraham—7:17
      - (a) Cf. Gen. 15:13-14
    - (2) God delivered Israel through Moses—7:18-41
      - (a) Despite Moses' imperfections
    - (3) God judicially abandoned Israel over to their sin—7:42-43
      - (a) Cf. Amos 5:25-27
  - iv) God dealt with Israel through the **JOSHUA, DAVID, and SOLOMON**—7:44-50 [Law—Exod. 25; Prophets—2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 6-8; Writings—1 Chron. 17; 2 Chron. 3]
    - (1) God temporarily dwelt in the Tabernacle—7:44-45
    - (2) God temporarily dwelt in the Temple—7:46-50
      - (a) Cf. Isa. 66:1-2
  - b) God's work in the present—7:51-53
    - God deals with Israel through **STEPHEN**—7:51-53
    - The defendant becomes the prosecutor.
    - i) He accuses them of spiritual stubbornness and insensitivity—7:51a
      - (1) These are standard prophetic insults in the OT. (Craig Keener)
      - (2) Cf. Exo. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13; 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:26
    - ii) He accuses them of actively opposing God's Spirit—7:51b
    - iii) He accuses them of actively opposing God's prophets—7:52a
      - (1) Cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 26:20-24
    - iv) He accuses them of betraying and murdering the Righteous One—7:52b
      - (1) Cf. Acts 3:14
    - v) He accuses them of being disobedient to the Law—7:53
      - (1) Law as ordained by angels: Deut. 33:2 (LXX); Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2
      - (2) Their false accusation against Stephen (6:11-14) was clearly demonstrated in their own hearts and lives.
- 3) **The response to God's witness**—7:54-8:3
- a) They are intensely angry—7:54
    - i) Not because they did not understand his sermon, but because they did.

- ii) This visceral response is a frenzied hijacking of the legal process concerning the false accusations against Stephen.
- b) Stephen stands in stark contrast to his accusers/murderers—7:55-56
  - i) Full of the Holy Spirit
  - ii) Gazes intently into heaven and ...
    - (1) Sees the glory of God
    - (2) Sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God (cf. Ps. 110:1)
      - These three options are summarized by L. Scott Kellum (EGGNT)
        - (a) To welcome Stephen?
        - (b) To intercede for Stephen?
        - (c) To be a witness (or judge) against the mob?
  - iii) Tells them what he sees in heaven.
    - (1) He identifies Jesus as the Son of Man. (the Messiah of Dan. 7:13-14)
- c) They cover their ears (to not listen to his “blasphemy?”)—7:57
- d) They take Stephen out of the city and stone him to death—7:58-59a
  - i) This is a leadership-sanctioned lynching. Perhaps they base their actions on Lev. 24:11-16 and Deut. 17:2-7.
  - ii) Normally the victim of stoning was stripped.
  - iii) Note how Saul is discretely introduced. (cf. Acts 13:9; 22:20)
    - (1) A “young man” [*neanias*] was between 24-40 years of age.
- e) Stephen stands in stark contrast to his accusers/murderers—7:59b-60
  - i) Similar attitude to that of Jesus in Luke 23:34, 46.
  - ii) Stephen does not confess the sins of others, but he does pray concerning their forgiveness.
- f) Saul savagely persecutes the church in Jerusalem—8:1-3
  - i) Saul’s guilt in Stephen’s murder is clearly stated. (8:1a) (cf. 26:10)
    - (1) It is difficult to determine if Saul’s “heartly agreement” indicates official voting or simply agreeing with putting Stephen to death.
  - ii) God providentially uses this persecution to spread His people beyond Jerusalem to fulfill Jesus’ statement in Acts 1:8. (8:1b)
  - iii) Saul’s savage response is in stark contrast to the godly men who mourn Stephen’s death. (8:2-3)

#### 4) Summary

- a) Stephen’s speech is *not* Law or temple critical, it is people critical on the basis of the Law and the Prophets, and of a proper theology of God’s presence and transcendence and so a proper theology of God’s dwelling place. (Ben Witherington, emphasis added)
- b) The martyrdom of Stephen showed that the *intransigent* temper of the Jewish leaders had not been changed by the great events of Pentecost nor by the apostolic miracles and witness which followed. And it marked the end of the comparatively tranquil early days of the disciples in the city of Jerusalem. (Alva McClain)

- c) The scene also portrays what is dividing the new faith from Judaism: the honor Jesus receives. What is glorious to Stephen is blasphemy to his audience. The two views cannot be more divergent. (Darrell Bock)

## Jesus Reaches Out to Samaria

Acts 8:4-25

- 1) **Jesus reaches out through Philip**—8:4-13
  - This section shows the results of the persecution—“therefore”—8:4
  - a) Example # 1: On the one hand, **generally**, the scattered believers go *everywhere* preaching [*euangelizo*] the Word—8:4
    - i) “Scattered” [*diaspeiro*] (cf. Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19) is related to 1 Pet. 1:1 [*diaspora*]. (cf. John 7:35; James 1:1)
  - b) Example # 2: And on the other hand, **specifically**, Philip (one of The Seven; 6:3-5) goes to the unnamed city in the region of Samaria—8:5-8
    - i) This was the third location named by Jesus in 1:8.
      - (1) About 35-40 miles north of Jerusalem.
      - ii) Who were the Samaritans?
        - (1) It had been the center of the northern Ten Tribes.
        - (2) It had been repopulated after the Assyrian Exile. (2 Kings 17)
        - (3) Remember Jesus’ earlier ministry here four years earlier. (John 4)
      - iii) What had been the typical Jewish attitude toward Samaritans up to this time? Cf. John 4:9
        - (1) Note the accusation by the Jews of Jesus in John 8:48
      - iv) What does Philip do among them?—8:5-7
        - (1) He preaches [*kerusso*] the theme of the Christ to them—8:5
          - (a) The Samaritans had an alternative coming ruler and prophet named Taheb (“Restorer”).
          - (2) He performs miracles among them to authenticate the message—8:6-7
            - (a) Releases demonized people
            - (b) Restores paralyzed and disabled people
        - v) How do the Samaritans respond?—8:6, 8
          - (1) Collectively paying close attention to what was being said by Philip
          - (2) Collectively rejoicing greatly
            - (a) For what reason(s) did they rejoice?
      - c) Example # 3: Simon the counterfeit—8:9-13
        - i) Simon’s background—8:9-11
          - (1) A legend in his own mind—8:9
            - (a) Practicing magic (astrology, divination, occult)
              - (i) This is the first confrontation with sorcerers: 8:9-24; 13:6-11; 16:16-24; 19:13-16
            - (b) Astonishing the people of Samaria
            - (c) Self-promoting: claiming to be someone great
          - (2) A legend in the mind of others—8:10-11
            - (a) An all-encompassing faith (“*giving attention to*”)
            - (b) An ongoing sense of awe (“*the Great Power of God*”)
        - ii) Simon’s profession of faith—8:12-13

- (1) Some appear to have responded with genuine faith concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and were immersed.
    - (a) Simon seems to be losing followers.
  - (2) Simon jumps on the bandwagon and is utterly amazed by the miracles.
    - (a) He is clearly more impressed with the miracles than with the message of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. (cf. Jn. 2:23-25)
    - (b) He seems to become a groupie/enthusiast of Philip.
    - (c) The genuineness of his “conversion” remains to be seen.
- iii) See the following chart by Philip Spencer.

<b>Simon the Sorcerer</b>	<b>Philip the Evangelist</b>
Works wonders (8:11)	Works wonders (8:6, 13)
Draws crowds (8:9-10)	Draws crowds (8:6-7)
Paid attention to (8:10-11)	Paid attention to (8:6)
Simon is “great power” (8:10)	Philip does “great powers” (8:13)
Simon “amazes” Samaritans with his claims and magic (8:9, 11)	Philip’s miracles “amaze” the Samaritans (8:13)

2) **Jesus reaches out through Peter and John—8:14-25**

- a) Peter and John are sent to officially evaluate the genuineness of the Samaritans’ salvation, and endorse Philip’s ministry—8:14-17 (cf. 11:21-22)
  - Will the Jerusalem believers accept the Samaritan believers?
  - i) They embraced the Word of God—8:14 (cf. 2:41; 11:1; 17:11)
  - ii) They are immersed—8:16
    - (1) They are not rebaptized.
  - iii) They receive the Holy Spirit—8:15-17
    - (1) **Negative:** This is not a “second work of grace” or a completion of an inadequate Samaritan salvation.
    - (2) **Positive:** This is recognition by the apostles that the Samaritan believers are genuinely spiritual equals with those in Jerusalem.
- b) Peter, the first among equals, confronts a counterfeit—8:18-24
  - Syncretism is the attempt to merge two or more different beliefs.
  - i) Simon attempts a bribe to obtain the authority [*exousia*] to give the Holy Spirit to others—8:18-19
    - (1) What, exactly, did Simon see or hear? There is no evidence the Samaritans spoke in tongues/different languages. (Cf. 2:11)
  - ii) Peter warns Simon of his danger—8:20-23
    - (1) The **threat** of Simon’s destruction—*perish*
    - (2) The **exposure** of Simon’s assumption—*you supposed*
    - (3) The **exclusion** of Simon’s heart from God—*you have no part or portion*
    - (4) The **necessity** of Simon’s repentance and forgiveness—*repent*
    - (5) The **result** of Simon’s unrighteous—*bondage of unrighteousness*
  - iii) Simon appears merely fearful of the consequences of his actions—8:24
    - (1) Is this repentance?

- (2) Cf. Jeroboam I (1 Kings 13:6) and Pharaoh (Ex. 8:8; 9:28; 10:17)
- c) Summary of the ministry to Samaria—8:25
- This verse is a transition to 8:26. It begins with “on the one hand ...” whereas v. 26 begins with “on the other hand ...”.
  - i) Peter and John solemnly witness [*diamarturomai*] and speak [*laleo*] the word of the Lord.
  - ii) Peter and John preach the gospel [*euangelizo*] to many Samaritan villages.
    - (1) The gospel begins to move away from an exclusive concern for Israel. (Darrell Bock)
    - (2) Note well the change in John’s heart. (cf. Luke 9:54)
  - iii) Peter disappears until 9:32, and John disappears until 12:2.
- 
- For further thought: was Simon genuinely saved? (Stanley Toussaint, BKC)
    - i) The verb “*believe*” does not always refer to saving faith. Simon’s faith could have been like that of the demons in James 2:19, merely intellectual assent.
    - ii) Faith based on signs is not a trustworthy faith (cf. John 2:23–25; 4:48).
    - iii) Luke never stated that Simon received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17–18).
    - iv) Simon continued to have a self-centered interest in the display of miraculous power (vv. 18–19).
    - v) The verb “*repent*” used in verse 22 is normally addressed to lost people.
    - vi) The word “*perish*” employed in verse 20 is strong. It is related to the word “perish” in John 3:16.
    - vii) The description of Simon in Acts 8:23 is a better description of a lost man than of one who is saved (cf. Deut. 29:18).

## Jesus Reaches Out To Ethiopia

Acts 8:26-40

- 1) **The setting for this account—8:26-28**
  - This completes the “on the one hand ... on the other hand ...” from 8:25.
  - a) What is the location—8:26
    - i) @ 50 miles WSW of Jerusalem; 65-70 miles SW of Samaria
    - ii) There was another major road to the south that went through Bethlehem and Hebron and ended up south of Gaza.
    - iii) While the expression “go south” can refer to *direction*, it can also reference *time*, as in “go about noon.” (cf. Tyndale, Greek OT)
      - (1) This is the hottest part of the day in the driest region near the southernmost city in Canaan.
  - b) Who are the main characters?—8:26-28
    - i) **Philip—8:26**
      - Previously ministered in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)
        - (1) He leaves behind new converts who have the Spirit to help them grow and be strong in the Lord.
        - (2) He leaves behind many to go where God wants him. But God has not told him what he will be doing in/near Gaza.
        - (3) He leaves to work with one man in a deserted place, but who is a potential witness to reach many in his own country.
    - ii) **The Ethiopian—8:27-28**
      - How does Luke describe this Gentile man?
        - (1) **Geographically**—from Ethiopia—a different country and continent
          - (a) From the Upper Nile region in Africa; Nubia in northern Sudan. Meroe is its capital city. It is about 200 miles south of Egypt.
          - (b) Because of the distance (@ 1,600 miles from Meroe to Jerusalem), if he came for Passover he would likely have stayed for Pentecost (50 days later). This is months and months of travel.
        - (2) **Physically**—a eunuch by birth, choice, or job responsibilities
          - (a) Not allowed to be a full Jewish proselyte (cf. Deut. 23:1)
          - (b) “Eunuch” was sometimes simply a title, similar to being celibate but not necessarily castrated. (cf. Gen. 39:1, LXX)
            - (i) Cf. Jer. 38:1-13
          - (c) Calling someone a “eunuch” was normally an insult (cf. Gal. 5:12).
          - (d) Remember the promises to eunuchs in Is. 56:3-5 & Matt. 19:10-12.
        - (3) **Socially**—a court official [*dunastes*] of queen (Candace is a title)
          - (a) The queen as probably Amantitere, who ruled AD 25-41.
        - (4) **Professionally**—in charge of all her treasure [*gaza*]
          - (a) Most of Rome’s trade with Africa further south came through Meroe. (NIVCBSB)
        - (5) **Spiritually**
          - (a) He is probably a God-fearer who had come to Jerusalem to worship.

- (i) Two words for Gentile God-fearers
    - 1. *Phobeo theos*: 10:2, 22, (Cornelius) 35; 13:16, 26
    - 2. *Sebo*: 13:43, 50; 16:14 (Lydia); 17:4, 17; 18:7 (Titius Justus)
  - (ii) Distinguished from a full proselyte (cf. 2:10; 6:5; 13:43)
  - (b) He is reading the OT Scriptures on his carriage journey home.
    - (i) This large (24' long), expensive scroll indicates his personal wealth, or at least access to wealth.
- 2) **How does Philip evangelize the Ethiopian?—8:29-35**
- a) He eagerly obeys the Holy Spirit—8:29-30a
    - i) Note the change from the angel in 8:26.
  - b) He listens and follows up with a question—8:30b
    - i) People in NT times normally read aloud, even when they were alone.
  - c) He accepts the man's humble invitation to join him and guide him—8:31
  - d) He answers the man's eager questions—8:34-35
    - i) Starts with the Bible passage in question (Is. 53:7b-8b)
    - ii) Preaches [*euangelizo*] Jesus to him from the Scriptures (LXX, Greek OT?)
      - (1) If he keeps reading in Isaiah, he will come to 56:3-5!
- 3) **What happened after the salvation of the Ethiopian?—8:36-40**
- 8:37 is found in only a comparatively few Greek manuscripts, beginning in the 500's AD, though non-biblical texts indicate awareness of something similar in the 100's AD.
  - a) Philip (a descendant of Shem. Cf. Gen. 9:26-27)
    - i) He ministers to (immerses) the Ethiopian.
      - (1) Note the providence of God in previously providing water in the desert for the baptism.
    - ii) He is taken by the Spirit (cf. 8:29) @ 20-25 miles NNE to Azotus (OT Ashdod of the Philistines)
      - (1) Cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16
    - iii) He ministers by preaching the gospel [*euangelizo*] in the various towns until he arrives in Caesarea, the capital of Roman Judea. (@ 50 miles further north)
      - (1) He seems to settle here, being found in this city nearly 20 years later. (cf. Acts 21:8)
  - b) The Ethiopian (a descendant of Ham. Cf. Gen. 9:26-27)
    - i) He is immersed by Philip.
      - (1) He takes the initiative and asks to be immersed.
    - ii) He goes on his way rejoicing. (cf. Acts 2:46; 5:41; 13:52; 15:3; 16:34)
      - (1) Perhaps because he was fully accepted into the Christian faith while having never been fully accepted by the Jewish religious system.

### Further thoughts on baptism/immersion:

- 1) **LXX uses:** (2x)
  - a) 2 Kings 5:14; Isa. 21:4
  
- 2) **NT uses:** (@ 80x in 65 verses)
  - a) **Gospels:** (45x in 36 verses)
    - i) Matt. (11x): 3:6, 11 (2x), 13, 14, 16; 20:22 (2x), 23 (2x); 28:19
    - ii) Mark (12x): 1:4, 5, 8 (2x), 9; 6:14; 7:4; 10:38 (2x), 39 (2x); 16:16
    - iii) Luke (9x): 3:7, 12, 16 (2x), 21; 7:29, 30; 11:38; 12:50
    - iv) John (13x): 1:25, 26, 28, 31, 33 (2x); 3:22, 23 (2x), 26; 4:1, 2; 10:40
  - b) **Acts:** (21x in 19 verses)
    - i) 1:5 (2x); 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 11:16 (2x); 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:3, 4, 5; 22:16
  - c) **Epistles:** (13x in 10 verses)
    - i) Rom.: 6:3 (2x); 1 Cor.: 1:13, 14, 15, 16 (2x), 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29 (2x); Gal.: 3:27
  
- 3) **Explanation**
  - a) The standard Greek lexicon (BAGD; compiled by [LC-MS] Missouri Synod Lutherans) defines *baptizo* as: to put or go under water, to plunge, to dip, to immerse, to drown.
  - b) There are other NT Greek words for *sprinkling* [*rantizo*] or *pouring* [*ekcheo*].
    - i) Sprinkle [*rantizo*]: Heb. 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22
    - ii) Pour [*ekcheo*]:
      - (1) Matt. 9:17; 23:35; 26:28; Mark 2:22; 14:24; Luke 5:37; 11:50; 22:20; John 2:15
      - (2) Acts 1:18; 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45; 22:20
      - (3) Rom. 3:15; 5:5; Titus 3:6; Jude 1:11; Rev. 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17
    - iii) Neither of these words are ever used in the NT for the local church ordinance of baptism.
  - c) Many Christian denominations will argue that the mode of baptism is not important, just obedience to the command for baptism.
    - i) Some of this thinking is based on the non-biblical writing of *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Twelve*), written @ 100's AD in the Middle East which includes the statement in chapter 7, <sup>1</sup> *But concerning baptism [*baptisma*], thus shall ye baptize [*baptizo*]. Having first recited all these things, baptize [*baptizo*] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. <sup>2</sup> But if thou hast not living (running) water, then baptize [*baptizo*] in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. <sup>3</sup> But if thou hast neither, then pour [*ekcheo*] water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
    - ii) Non-biblical sources are not the basis for NT local church practice.

## Jesus Calls Saul the Persecutor

Acts 9:1-31

**Introduction:** This event is very important to Luke who records it three times in his book (Acts 9, 22, 26). This takes place not long after the martyrdom of Stephen, @ 34/35 AD.

Saul is a descendant of Shem, of the tribe of Benjamin. (Cf. Gen. 9:26-27; Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5)

### 1) **Jesus saves Saul on the road to Damascus—9:1-9**

- The @ 135-mile trip from Jerusalem to Damascus was a six-day journey.
- a) What is Saul doing before his salvation?—9:1-2
  - i) He continues making threats to intentionally kill believers.
    - (1) Cf. Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3; 9:13-14; 22:4; 26:10; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:6
    - ii) He seeks permission to make people of both sexes prisoners.
      - (1) Caiaphas was probably the high priest yet. He ruled from AD 18-36.
      - (2) The Damascus synagogues were under the authority of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin.
        - (a) There were possibly as many as 20,000 Jews living in Damascus.
        - (3) “The Way” cf. Acts 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22
  - b) What is Saul’s experience while traveling?—9:3-7
    - This is the first of Saul’s/Paul’s six visions. (cf. 9:3-ff; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-18; 23:11; 27:23-24)
    - i) The **location**—9:3a
      - (1) Near to Damascus (near the end of his six-day journey).
    - ii) The **events**—9:3b-4 both visual (flashing light) and audible (sound of Jesus’ voice)
      - (1) Note well that Jesus takes the initiative.
      - (2) The light is that of Jesus’ displayed glory. (cf. Acts 9:17, 27; 22:14; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8)
        - (a) This is the last of the seven post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-8)
      - (3) The light of Jesus’ glory is brighter than the sun. (cf. Acts 26:13)
      - (4) Falling to the ground in God’s presence is natural. (cf. Eze. 1:28; Dan. 8:17)
      - (5) Jesus knows the one that is persecuting Him.
        - (a) The repetition of Saul’s name (cf. Gen. 22:11; 46:2; Exod. 3:4; 1 Sam. 3:10; 2 Sam. 19:4; Luke 10:41; 22:31)
      - (6) The loss of this leader of the persecution must have been a staggering blow to the Jewish opposition. For when Saul changed sides in the battle and began at once to confound the Jews at Damascus by his preaching of Jesus, “proving that this is very Christ,” Luke says that they “took counsel to kill him” (cf. 9:22–24) (Alva J. McClain)

- iii) The **communication**—9:5-6
    - (1) Saul's question is somewhere between polite respect ("sir") and full theological recognition ("Lord").
    - (2) Jesus' answer: identification and commands
      - (a) Despite Saul's persecution of Jesus, Jesus instructs Saul to continue into the city of Damascus, giving Saul time to process what has happened.
  - iv) The **companions**—9:7-8
    - (1) They are speechless, hearing a sound but not observing anyone
    - (2) They saw only the light but did not understand the voice. (cf. Dan. 10:7; John 12:28-29; Acts 22:9)
    - (3) They assist him in obeying the commands of Jesus.
      - (a) He stays at the well-known house of Judas. (cf. 9:11)
  - c) What is Saul's physical condition after his vision of Christ?—9:8-9
    - i) **Involuntary:**
      - (1) Temporarily unable to see (three days), needs to be physically guided
        - (a) Like Zechariah in Luke 1:22.
      - (2) Some have argued this is related to 2 Cor. 12:7 and Gal. 6:11.
    - ii) **Voluntary:**
      - (1) He is able to stand and walk
      - (2) He fasts, he does not eat or drink (for three days?)
      - (3) He prays (cf. 9:11)
  - d) Thankfully, his initial plans (9:1-2) have been divinely interrupted.
- 2) **Jesus commissions Saul in Damascus**—9:10-25
  - a) Jesus speaks to both Ananias and Saul in complementary visions—9:10-12
    - i) Ananias—9:10-11
      - (1) A believer who had been a well-respected, Godward Jew (cf. 22:12)
      - (2) Sees a vision of Jesus and recognizes Him. (cf. 9:17)
      - (3) Given two commands: go and inquire
        - (a) A specific man in a specific house on a specific street.
        - (b) This will fulfill the prediction in 9:6.
        - (c) The vision to Paul assumes the obedience of Ananias. (cf. 9:12)
    - ii) Saul—9:12
      - (1) Noted as being from Tarsus, not Jerusalem. (cf. 9:30; 22:3; )
        - (a) Tarsus was a large prominent commercial and educational city, ranked with Athens (Greece) and Alexandria (Egypt).
      - (2) Noted as being in prayer.
      - (3) Noted as having seen a vision (the second part of his first vision) about Ananias and the restoration of Saul's sight.
  - b) How does Ananias initially respond?—9:13-14
    - i) His initial, unsurprising reluctance.
    - ii) This is the first time in Acts that believers are called "*saints*". (9:13, 32, 41; 26:10)

- (1) They are also referred to as “*those who call on Your name.*” (cf. 2:21; 22:16) (cf. “name” in 9:15-16, 21, 27)
- (2) They are distinguished here from the people of Israel.
- iii) He knows Saul has government-sanctioned authority to arrest believers.
- c) How does Jesus describe the transformed Saul to Ananias?—9:15-16
  - The “go” command of 9:11 is repeated in 9:15.
  - i) **Select:** from being a Sanhedrin-appointed persecutor to a chosen instrument/utensil/vessel of Jesus. (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21)
    - (1) This is why it is safe for Ananias to visit Saul.
  - ii) **Spread:** from being Israel-centric to spreading Jesus’ name (cf. 9:14) before Gentiles and kings and Jews.
    - (1) Saul/Paul eventually appears before Governor Felix (24:1-23), Governor Porcius Festus (24:27-25:12), King Herod Agrippa II (25:13-26:32), and possibly Emperor Nero (25:11-12; 2 Tim. 4:16-17).
  - iii) **Suffer:** from being self-oriented to suffering for Jesus’ name’s sake (cf. 2 Cor. 12:16-33)
- d) How does Ananias respond?—9:17 (courageous obedience despite fear)
  - i) **Locomotion:** departs and enters the house where Saul is staying
  - ii) **Inclusion and identification:** lays his hands on Saul
  - iii) **Communication:** speaks to Saul (cf. Acts 22:14-16)
    - (1) There are two ways of spelling Saul’s name.
      - (a) Hebrew, *Saoul*: 9:4 (2x), 17; 13:21; 22:7 (2x), 13; 26:14 (2x)
      - (b) Greek, *Saulos*: 7:58; 8:1, 3; 9:1, 8, 11, 19, 22, 24, 26; 11:25, 30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7, 9
  - iv) **Explanation:** tells Saul why he is there
    - (1) Restoration of Saul’s sight
    - (2) Enablement of Saul for ministry (cf. 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9)
      - (a) This is NOT the baptism in or receiving of the Spirit.
- e) What does Saul do after miraculously receiving his sight?—9:18-20 (grace in practical action)
  - i) After persecuting Jesus, he now identifies with Jesus in immersion.
  - ii) After going three days without nourishment, he is now restored physically through normal means.
  - iii) After coming to arrest them, he now spends time with other believers.
    - (1) This extends (at a minimum) from the summer of AD 35 through the summer of AD 37. (Cf. Gal. 1:15-18)
  - iv) After once rejecting this truth, he now proclaims the Messianic deity of Jesus in the synagogue.
- f) How do the people respond to Saul’s message concerning Jesus?—9:21-25
  - i) Some are bewildered at the transformation of Saul (9:21-22)
    - (1) Saul increases in his abilities and causes consternation to the Damascus Jews by logically proving that Jesus is the Messiah.
    - (2) This is similar to the response to Jesus’ first teaching in Luke 4:22.
  - ii) Some want to assassinate him (9:23-25) (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32-33)

- (1) Whatever else transpired during this time, it appears to have led the Jewish leaders and the ethnarch/governor under King Aretas (ruled 9 BC - AD 40, Arabs from Nabataea, modern Jordan, south of Damascus) to work together against a common aggravation, namely Saul.
- (2) **Question:** Does Paul's escape demonstrate a lack of faith?
- iii) Perhaps for them Saul is the issue, whereas for Saul, Jesus is the issue.  
(Craig Keener)

### 3) What was Saul's reception in Jerusalem upon returning from Damascus?—9:26-30

#### a) From **believers**

- i) **Awkwardness:** all the disciples in Jerusalem are afraid of him, not believing Saul is a genuine disciple. (9:26)
  - (1) He attempts to identify with the very people he was persecuting a few years ago, but in their home city where he was well known.
  - (2) It is possible he stayed with his sister. (cf. 23:16)
  - (3) As William MacDonald point out, this is the most dangerous place Saul could visit.
- ii) **Acceptance:** Barnabas sets the example. (9:27-28)
  - (1) He takes the initiative by assisting Saul's meeting with the apostles.
    - (a) Saul possibly meets with Peter and James during this time. (cf. Gal. 1:18-19)
    - (2) He systematically lays out the details of Saul's conversion and early life as a believer over the past 2-3 years. Three things are emphasized.
      - (a) The ascended Jesus appeared to Saul.
      - (b) The ascended Jesus talked to Saul.
      - (c) Saul had communicated boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.
    - (3) His gracious intervention works.
  - iii) **Avoidance:** the disciples rescue Saul, take him down to the seashore at Caesarea (@ 65-70 miles northwest), and send him to Tarsus (his home city, @ 300 miles north by ship). (9:30) (cf. 9:25)
    - (1) This takes place in response to a vision Saul experienced in the Temple. (cf. Acts 22:17-21)
    - (2) This takes place in autumn of AD 37. He will stay in Tarsus until the spring of AD 43 (5-1/2 years). (cf. Acts 11:25-26; Gal. 1:21)
    - (3) He essentially disappears from public ministry to the Jews and now begins his ministry to the Gentiles among the descendants of Japheth. (cf. Gen. 10:2-5; Acts 22:21)

#### b) From **unbelievers** (primarily Hellenistic (Greek-culture) Jews, like Saul himself)

- The persecutor becomes the persecuted.
- i) Saul talked with them and argued/debated with them. (9:29a)
- ii) They were unsuccessful in their attempts to kill Saul. (9:29b)

- (1) Perhaps these are the same people who killed Stephen a few years ago.  
(cf. Acts 6:8-10)

**PROGRESS REPORT # 6—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JUDEA, GALILEE, & SAMARIA—**  
**ACTS 9:31**

1. **THE CHURCH ENJOYS PEACE.** (In part because Saul left?)
  - **BEING BUILT UP**
  - **GOING ON THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**
2. **THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO INCREASE.**

## Jesus Reaches Out to Both Jews and Gentiles

Acts 9:32-11:18

- 1) **Jesus reaches out through Peter in the coastal plain—9:32-43**
  - a) In Lydda and Sharon—9:32-35 (healing a man)
    - Lydda/Lod is @ 25 miles NW of Jerusalem. It was at the major intersection of the road from Jerusalem to Joppa (NW/SE) and the road from Egypt to Syria (SW/NE).
    - This is where Israel's modern *David Ben Gurion Airport* is located.
    - Luke will personally travel through this area later. (cf. 21:15-17)
  - i) What does God accomplish through Peter here (9:33-34)? (cf. Luke 5:17-26)
    - (1) He visits those who had turned to Christ ("saints")
      - (a) Possibly due to the events at Pentecost. (2:5-41)
      - (b) Possibly due to earlier persecution. (8:1, 4, 40)
      - (c) Possibly due to Philip's earlier ministry. (8:40)
    - (2) Providentially finds Aeneas, who has been paralyzed for eight years.
      - (a) Paralyzed from a stroke, a fall, or some illness.
    - (3) Proclaims the healing by Jesus, commands him to demonstrate the healing by standing up and preparing his mat/bed.
  - ii) What is the response by the people in the area (9:35)?
    - (1) The miracle is confirmed throughout the town of Lydda and the larger plain (@ 10 x 50 miles) of Sharon.
    - (2) Some turned to the Lord. (cf. 11:21; 15:19)
- b) In Joppa—9:36-43 (resuscitating a woman)
  - Joppa/Jaffa is @ 40 miles NW of Jerusalem (@ 10-11 miles NW of Lydda); on the coast. It is a suburb of modern Tel-Aviv.
  - Remember Joppa from 1 Chron. 2:16 and Jonah 1:3.
- i) What does God accomplish through Peter in Joppa (9:37-41)?
  - (1) Tabitha/Dorcas is described as habitually generous and merciful. (9:36)
    - (a) This is later explained as making clothes for widows. (cf. 9:39)
  - (2) Tabitha/Dorcas becomes weak and dies. (9:37)
    - (a) They treat her corpse with tender respect.
    - (b) While a body was normally buried the same day, occasionally a body was "kept" for 3 days.
  - (3) The disciples enlist Peter's help. (9:38)
    - (a) An @ 4-hour trip one way on foot.
  - (4) Tabitha is privately resuscitated. (9:39-41) (cf. Luke 8:49-56)
    - (a) Having contact with her corpse would make Peter ceremonially unclean.
- ii) What is the response by the people in the area (9:42)?
  - (1) The news spreads, and many trusted in Jesus.
- iii) What does Peter do after this miracle? (9:43)

- (1) He stays with a (probably despised) stinky man whose job possibly makes him ceremonially unclean.

2) **Jesus reaches out through Peter to sympathetic Gentiles in Caesarea**—  
10:1-48

- Cornelius is a descendant of Japheth. (Cf. Gen. 9:26-27)
  - This is one of the most important sections in Acts.
  - This takes place @ AD 40-41.
- a) What is Cornelius like (10:1-2)?
    - i) **His location:** *Caesarea* is the Roman administration center of Judea
      - (1) Caesarea was a primarily Gentile city @ 65 miles NW of Jerusalem.
      - (2) Caesarea Maritima is to be distinguished from Caesarea Philippi to the north. (cf. Matt. 16:13)
      - (3) It boasted a man-made harbor built with poured-concrete that could set underwater.
    - ii) **His name:** *Cornelius*
    - iii) **His rank and unit:** *a centurion of ...* (a noncommissioned officer [NCO] of @ 80-100 men) *the Italian cohort* (@ 400-600 men, 1/10 of a legion)
      - (1) There were five infantry cohorts in Caesarea at this time and one cavalry unit.
      - (2) The Italian cohort seems to have been comprised of archers.
    - iv) **His Godward spiritual life:** (five traits)
      - (1) He is *a devout man*
        - (a) He apparently was a nice man who lived up to the light which God had given him so far.
      - (2) He is *one who feared God*
        - (a) A Gentile who is not a full proselyte, but one who identifies publicly with the God of Israel. (cf. 8:27-28)
        - (b) While he may have abandoned traditional Roman polytheism, he was not a genuine believer in Christ. (Cf. 11:14)
      - (3) He leads his wife, children, and servants to do the same *with all his household*
      - (4) He *gives many alms to the (Jewish) people*
        - (a) Cf. Gen. 12:3
        - (b) Centurions were paid @ 10 denarii a day, or 3,750 per year.
          - (i) Regular troops were paid 200-250 denarii per year, depending on their responsibilities.
      - (5) He *prays to God continually*
        - (a) This is observed in 10:3, the afternoon Jewish prayer time.
  - b) How does God communicate with Cornelius? (10:3-8)
    - i) A shining angel appears to him in an internal vision and speaks to him. (10:3, cf. 10:30)
      - (1) At the time of Jewish afternoon prayers, i.e. 3 pm.
    - ii) The angel encourages him that God is aware of all things. (10:4)

- (1) Cornelius, the soldier, responds with fear.
- (2) The angel recognizes the Jewishness of Cornelius' actions.
- iii) The angel commands him to summon Peter and explains Peter's whereabouts. (10:5-6)
  - (1) He is normally more used to *giving* orders than *receiving* them.
  - (2) The angel also stated that Peter would explain to Cornelius and his family about genuine salvation. (cf. 11:14)
- iv) He immediately obeys the angel's commands. (10:7-8)
  - (1) Caesarea to Joppa is @ 30-35 miles. The trio arrives at Simon's house the next day around noon. (cf. 10:9) Thus, they covered 30-35 miles in less than @ 21 hours overnight.
- c) How does God communicate with Peter? (10:9-13)
  - i) Peter is praying on Simon's flat rooftop @ noon. (10:9)
    - (1) This is not a normally scheduled time for prayer. However, see Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10.
  - ii) Peter becomes hungry and people begin preparing food. (10:10a)
  - iii) Peter experiences an unusual trance. (10:10b-13)
    - A trance [*ekstasis*] (10:10; 11:15) and a vision [*horama*] (cf. 10:3, 17) are distinguished. *Ekstasis* {ecstasy, ecstatic} is suspended consciousness with no objective reality, while *horama* {panorama} refers to that which is perceived.
      - (1) He sees unusual things. (10:10b-12)
      - (2) He hears an unusual command. (10:13)
- d) What is Peter's initial reaction to God's message (10:14-16)?
  - He may be hungry, but he's not *THAT* hungry!
  - This is, indeed, food for thought.
  - i) This is the third recorded time when Peter refuses God's revealed will. (cf. Matt. 16:23; John 13:8; Acts 10:14)
    - (1) Lev. 11 is the primary OT text on clean/unclean foods.
    - (2) Pastor William Scroggie (1877-1958, studied under Charles Spurgeon, pastored in England, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania, the US, and Canada) wrote: Whoever says "Not so" should never add "Lord," and whoever truly says "Lord" will never say "Not so."
    - (3) Cf. Ezek. 4:14-15
    - (4) His intentions were good, but he was being hesitant to obey Jesus.
  - ii) The contents of the sheet are acceptable in the presence of God. (10:16)
  - iii) Additional thoughts:
    - (1) Cf. Mark 7:14-23; Rom. 14:14; Acts 15:9, 20; 1 Tim. 4:4
    - (2) Peter will struggle with this for many years. (cf. Gal. 2:11-ff in AD 49)
    - (3) The vision is obviously not about food laws but God's attitude toward people. (William Marty) (cf. Acts 10:28)
- e) Does God wait for Peter to get everything settled in his mind before He gets him involved in ministry (10:17-23)?

- i) Peter, having returned to full consciousness, is completely confused [*diaporeo*]. (10:17a) (cf. Acts 2:12; 5:24)
  - (1) If God is unchanging, and He is (cf. Mal. 3:6), what does this mean?
- ii) The three men from Cornelius arrive. (10:17b-18)
- iii) Peter is giving serious thought to [*dienthumeomai*] the trance. (10:19a)
- iv) The Spirit commands Peter to accompany the three. (10:19b-20)
  - (1) Perhaps a mild rebuke with “without taking issue/without making a distinction” [*diakrino*]?
  - (2) The Spirit has not only sent the apostles to the Gentiles, but He has sent the Gentiles to the apostles. (FSB)
- v) Peter interacts with the three. (10:21-23)
  - (1) He comes down from the rooftop (a literal step of faith), identifies himself, and asks the purpose of their visit. (10:21)
  - (2) They transparently and respectfully identify their immediate and intermediate authorities. (10:22)
  - (3) He shows hospitality, and then obeys the Spirit’s commands. (10:23)
    - (a) Peter takes six Jewish believers with him, perhaps as witnesses to what might happen. (cf. 10:45; 11:12)
- f) How do Cornelius and Peter interact? (10:24-33)
  - i) Cornelius
    - (1) Having confidently assembled an audience of extended relatives and close friends, he waits expectantly for Peter’s arrival. (10:24, 27)
      - (a) If they lived in his house, he would not need to summon them.
      - (b) Not all relatives are friends, and not all friends are relatives.
    - (2) Mistakenly shows inappropriate veneration for Peter? (10:25)
      - (a) Contrast with responses to Jesus. (cf. Luke 8:41; 17:16; 24:52)
    - (3) Summarizes his new understanding of God’s revelation. (10:30-33)
      - (a) “Four days” does not mean 96 hours, but parts of four days.
      - (b) “Before God” indicates an awareness that God is responsible for this meeting.
  - ii) Peter
    - (1) Demonstrates humility. (10:26; cf. 14:15; Rev. 19:10)
      - (a) Who is mistaken, Peter or Cornelius?
      - (b) Contrast with unbelievers like Simon and Herod Agrippa I (8:9-10; 12:22-23.
      - (c) How refreshing, after the Gospel accounts. (cf. Mark 9:34; Luke 22:24)
    - (2) Summarizes his new understanding of God’s revelation. (10:28-29)
- g) Peter evangelizes Cornelius and his friends (10:34-43).
  - This is Peter’s fourth sermon in Acts (cf. 2:14-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12)
- i) He grasps the main point of the trance. (10:34-35)
  - (1) God is impartial in His personal relationships.
    - (a) This is not new revelation, but a new understanding of God’s revelation. (Cf. Deut. 10:17; Jonah 1:2; 4:2; 2 Kings 5:14)

- (2) God expects transformation of heart and life.
- ii) He applies the main point of the gospel. (10:36-43) (cf. 11:13-14; 15:9)
  - (1) The life of Christ (10:36-38)
    - (a) Christ is the exclusive way of peace for all ethnicities.
      - (i) Cf. Rom. 3:29-30; 10:12
    - (b) Christ is the anointed of God with the Spirit and power.
      - (i) Note the Tri-unity of God here.
    - (c) Christ went about doing good because God was with Him.
      - (i) Peter assumes that Cornelius' gathering has some basic knowledge of Jesus' activity.
  - (2) The witnesses of Christ. (10:39-43)
    - (a) Witnesses of all Jesus did. (10:39a)
    - (b) Witnesses of what was done to Jesus. (10:39b)
      - (i) Cf. Deut. 21:22-23; Acts 5:30-31; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24
    - (c) Witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and appearances. (10:40-41)
      - (i) Cf. John 21:1-19; 1 Cor. 15:5-8
    - (d) Witnesses of Jesus as the appointed Judge of all people. (10:42)
      - (i) "The people" probably refers to Israel.
      - (ii) Cf. Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:3-5; Rev. 20
    - (e) Witnesses of saving faith and forgiveness of sins. (10:43)
      - (i) Cf. Ps. 22; Is. 52:13-53:12; Zech. 11:4-14
- h) The results of Jesus' ministry to Gentiles (10:44-48; cf. 2:1-11; 8:4-25).
  - Some refer to this as "The Gentile Pentecost."
    - i) The Gentiles hear the Word. (10:44)
    - ii) The Spirit is poured out on Gentiles. (10:44-45)
    - iii) The Gentiles speak in different languages, speaking of the greatness of God. (10:46)
      - (1) Cf. Luke 1:46, 58; Acts 19:17; Phil. 1:20
    - iv) The Gentiles are immersed. (10:47-48a)
      - (1) The question in 10:47 assumes a negative answer.
    - v) The Gentiles show hospitality to Peter and his team of six. (10:48b)
  - i) Peter still wrestles with the practical application of these truths @ 8 years later. (cf. Gal. 2:11-16)
- 3) **Jesus reaches out through Peter to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem—**  
11:1-18
  - a) The criticism against Peter reaching out beyond his comfort zone. (11:1-3)
    - i) The (incomplete?) news about the Gentiles' favorable response to God's Word travels. (Cf. 2:41; 8:14; 17:11; 1 Thess. 1:6-7)
      - (1) No news about receiving the Spirit and being immersed? (cf. 10:47-48)
    - ii) The negative criticism [*diakrino*] of Peter by certain Jewish-Christians.
      - (1) "Came up to Jerusalem" from Caesarea. (sea level up to 2,500-3,000')
      - (2) Is their "evidence" accurate? Is their interpretation and criticism God-honoring?

- (3) Note the criticism of Peter's apostolic leadership.
- (4) Apparently the God-fearing, partial-proselyte Cornelius was not Jewish enough.
- b) How does Peter handle ungodly criticism? (11:4-17)
  - i) He organizes his explanation in logical sequence. (11:4) (cf. Lk. 1:3)
    - (1) Note that he does not directly address their criticisms of 11:2.
  - ii) He carefully recites the events of 10:9-48. (11:5-15)
    - (1) Remember that he has a minimum of six witnesses. (11:12; cf. 10:23)
      - (a) Cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15 for Jewish law
      - (b) Cf. Rev. 5:1 (seven seals/witnesses) for Roman law
    - (2) He recognizes that Acts 2 as the beginning of a new era. (11:15)
  - iii) He reminds them of a quote from 1:5. (11:16)
  - iv) He challenges them concerning the work of God the Father. (11:17)
    - (1) Note how Peter's reasoning differs from Gamaliel's earlier pragmatism. (cf. 5:38-39)
- c) What impact does Peter's testimony have on those who were initially critical of him (11:18)?
  - i) They quiet down, i.e. no objections.
    - (1) Apparently whatever version of the events had trickled into their ears and caused such consternation was now set straight by the truth.
    - (2) There were those who held on to their prejudices @ eight years later at the counsel in Jerusalem. (cf. Acts 15)
  - ii) They glorify God.
  - iii) They confirm the validity of Peter's words concerning God the Father's work in Gentile Caesarea Maritima.
    - (1) Partially fulfilling Is. 42:1, 6; 49:6.
    - (2) Explained further in Eph. 2:11-22.
- d) This is the third people-group that Peter has verified as genuine followers of Christ. (cf. Acts 2, 8, 10)
  - i) This may be a partial fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matt. 16:17-29.

## Jesus Forms a Multi-Ethnic Church In Antioch

Acts 11:19-30

**Note:** This occurs @ AD 41 through spring-44. We see the shift from predominantly rural ministry to urban Jerusalem to a cosmopolitan ministry. (Craig Keener)

### 1) **Jesus reaches out to two distinct people groups—11:19-21**

- This references back to Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7-8.
- a) *On the one hand:* to the **Jews** of Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch—11:19
  - i) Locations
    - (1) Phoenicia—modern Lebanon, directly north of Israel
    - (2) Cyprus—a large island in the Mediterranean Sea
      - (a) Home of Joseph/Barnabas (cf. Acts 4:36)
    - (3) Antioch—modern Syria
      - (a) The third largest city in the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria)
        - (i) It was considered a *metropolis*, i.e. a mother-city to smaller surrounding cities, towns, and villages.
        - (b) While it was a pagan, immoral city, it was also tolerant of the Jews.
        - (c) The Roman military and administrative capital in southern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)
        - (d) It remains the ministry location focus through Acts 15.
        - (e) It is to this congregation that Saul/Paul submits. (cf. 18:22)
      - (i) Limitations: *speaking the word to no one except to the Jews alone.*
  - ii) *But on the other hand:* to the **Greeks** [*hellenistes*] of Antioch—11:20-21
    - i) Whom does God use to reach out to these Greeks? (11:20a)
      - (1) *Men of Cyprus* (island in the Mediterranean)
      - (2) *Men of Cyrene* (north Africa, west of Egypt, modern-day Libya)
        - (a) This group may include Lucius. (cf. 2:10; 13:1)
    - ii) What is their message? (11:20b)
      - (1) The good news of the Lord Jesus.
      - (2) There may be significance that the concept of Christ/Messiah is not emphasized with these Gentiles, but the concept of Lordship is.
    - iii) What is the result of their ministry? (11:21)
      - (1) Enablement/blessing: *the hand of the Lord was with them*
      - (2) Conversion: *a large number (of Greeks) who, having believed, turned to the Lord.* (cf. 9:35; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 1 Thess. 1:9)
      - (3) Luke describes the numerical growth of believers in Antioch just as he described the numerical growth of believers in Jerusalem.
    - iv) How will God use this new church in the future?
      - (1) Cf. Acts 13:1-4; 15:35, 40; 18:22-23.

### 2) **Barnabas is sent to Antioch—11:22-26**

- a) Why is he sent there?

- i) What does the church of Jerusalem hear? Cf. Acts 11:21
    - (1) Antioch is @ 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
  - ii) Where was Barnabas originally from? Cf. Acts 4:36.
  - iii) Where are the “church planters” from? Cf. Acts 11:20.
  - iv) How does sending Barnabas compare with an earlier example noticed in 8:14?
- b) What is he accomplishing there?—11:22-24
- i) He officially represents [*exapostello*] the church in Jerusalem, not a mere “church inspector.”
    - (1) Cf. 9:27
    - (2) Luke endorses the church in Antioch to be of the same character as the church in Jerusalem. (11:22, 26)
  - ii) He rejoices in the obvious display of God’s grace to Gentiles.
  - iii) He encourages them with a purposeful heart to remain true to the Lord.
- c) How does Luke describe Barnabas?—11:22-26
- i) Trustworthy, observant, purposeful, actively good, full of the Spirit, full of faith.
    - (1) Remember that Luke writes these descriptions years after the division between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:39.
    - (2) He is the only man in Acts that is called “good.” (Cf. Luke 23:50)
  - ii) Took time to search for Saul in Tarsus (cf. 9:30; @ 100-125 miles north) and recruits him to move south to Antioch.
    - (1) He opted to not turn to the Jerusalem church for help at this time.
    - (2) Saul had been in Tarsus for @ 5-1/2 years. [autumn 37 – spring 43]
      - (a) Saul has been a believer for @ 8 years.
- d) How is God using Barnabas and Saul in Antioch?—11:26
- i) Gathered together with the church, taught many people
- e) What does the new name for the believers indicate?—11:26
- i) They are now recognized by outsiders as being distinct from Judaism.
  - ii) Cf. Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16 (a legal charge against them)
- 3) **Antioch believers show mercy to the believers in Judea—11:27-30**
- a) What is prompting their act of mercy?—11:27-28
- i) This possibly takes place @ AD 46-47.
  - ii) The elevation of Antioch is @ 225’ above sea level. Jerusalem is @ 2,500’.
  - iii) The Jerusalem prophet Agabus (cf. 21:10) specifies a famine over the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54). (cf. Acts 18:2)
    - (1) There were no prophets in Antioch at this time. However, cf. Acts 13:1.
    - (2) The drought-related famine lasted from AD 45-48.
- b) How do they decide how much each person will give?—11:29
- i) The tension builds. How will Gentile-Christians respond to God’s Word concerning Jewish-Christians who are in need?
    - (1) Note that there is no command (from God or people) to give.

- ii) In proportion to their financial ability, each person voluntarily determined how to financially minister [*diakonia*] mercy to those suffering in Judea.
    - (1) Cf. 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7
  - iii) There are historical indications that Antioch was also suffering from the famine.
- c) How is the gift sent to Judea?—11:30
- i) The congregation authorized the sending [*apostello*] of the financial gift by means of two qualified men, Barnabas and Saul.
    - (1) This may be the same visit described in Gal. 2:1-10.
    - (2) This is distinct from the offering in 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; and Rom. 15:25-32.
  - ii) The primarily-Gentile-Christian congregation in Antioch decided to send the financial gift @ 300 miles away to the elders of the primarily-Jewish-Christian congregation in Jerusalem.
    - (1) This is the first use of the noun “elders” [*presbuteros*] in a Christian context. (cf. Acts 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1, 5; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1)
      - (a) Luke uses noun *overseer* [*episkopos*] in Acts 20:28.
      - (b) Luke uses the verb *shepherd* [*poimaino*] in Acts 20:28.
    - (2) Perhaps the Seven (cf. Acts 6) were now scattered due to the persecution (cf. 8:1) and the elders have resumed this financial responsibility.

## Jesus Works In Persecution

Acts 12:1-25

### 1) Jesus allows Herod Agrippa I to kill James—12:1-2

- Note how this cold-heartedness stands in stark contrast to the merciful love of the Antioch congregation. (Stanley Toussaint)
  - Herod Agrippa I reigned AD 37-44. He was the grandson of Herod the Great. He was pro-Pharisee and sought popularity among the Jewish people. He was the first Jewish ruler over Jerusalem in 35 years.
- a) Why would Herod want to mistreat the church?—12:1
    - i) This is the first truly *political* persecution.
    - ii) The first religious persecution (Acts 4:1) had been started by the Temple leaders, who were primarily *Sadducees*.
    - iii) The second religious persecution (Acts 8:1, 3) expanded to include the *Pharisees*.
  - b) Who is this James?—12:2
    - i) Cf. Matt. 4:21; 17:1; Mark 3:17; Luke 5:10
    - ii) This is James/Jacob the apostle (brother of John), not Jesus' half-brother.
    - iii) He is the first apostle to be martyred.
  - c) Why was he beheaded?
    - i) Cf. Deut. 13:12-15
    - ii) The Sanhedrin normally used four kinds of capital punishment: stoning, burning, slaying by the sword, and choking.
      - (1) Beheading usually followed by stripped and scourged.
      - (2) Beheading was considered merciful because it was swift.
    - iii) Note the fulfillment of Jesus' words to James—Mark 10:35-40

### 2) Jesus delivers Peter from prison—12:3-19

- This now involves 2/3 of Jesus' inner circle of apostles.
- a) Questions
    - i) How many other times has Peter been arrested? Cf. Acts 4:3 & 5:18.
      - (1) Is it necessarily a sinful thing to be arrested?
    - ii) Why is Peter released while James lost his life?—Heb. 11:35-37
  - b) What precautions did the authorities put in place?—12:3-4
    - i) Passover was on April 4, AD 44.
    - ii) Arrested him, took him into custody, put him in prison (the Fortress Antonia?), guarded him with at least 4 soldiers (4 soldiers in each 6-hour period, perhaps a 3-hour period at night), an iron gate (cf. 12:10).
      - (1) He was chained to two soldiers while two others stood guard. (cf. 12:6)
  - c) What weapon did the early church use to secure Peter's release?—12:5
    - i) On the one hand, the authorities were doing all they could at the prison.
    - ii) On the other hand, the congregation was praying fervently to God at someone's house.
      - (1) Note their surprise when their prayers are answered. Cf. 12:12-16

- (2) Note five aspects of their prayer (Jewish NT Commentary):
- (a) Intense, not casual
  - (b) Ongoing, “was being made”
  - (c) To God, genuine contact with the living God, not empty repetition
  - (d) Specific, not vague, “for him”
  - (e) Communal, “by the church”
- d) What was Peter’s response to his deliverance?—12:6-12 (cf. 5:17-20)
- i) **Initial** obedience, misinterpretation of the events—12:6-10
    - (1) Nothing is said about the apparently unresponsive guards.
  - ii) **Ultimately**, he correctly interprets God’s angelic rescue—12:11-12
    - (1) From whom was Peter rescued? (12:11)
- e) What was the church’s response to Peter’s deliverance?—12:12-17
- Question: Have you ever been surprised at an answer to prayer?
  - i) John Mark is introduced—12:12
    - (1) Cf. 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39
    - (2) He is the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
  - ii) Rhoda’s joyful response—12:13-14
    - *Rhododendron* (rose-tree) is related to this name.
    - (1) Mary, the (widowed?) mother of John Mark, was likely a slave owner.
      - (a) There is no condemnation or apology for this behavior.
      - (b) According to Roman Law by this time, slaves were distinct from normal property. Their humanity was recognized. Rhoda is clearly portrayed as a reliable, honest human being who perceives the truth when other do not. She is the only Christian slave that is named in Acts. (Cf. Cornelius’ anonymous slaves in Acts 10:7)
      - (c) See Craig Keener’s separate article on *Slaves and Slavery*.
      - (d) The slave girl is familiar enough with Peter to recognize his voice.
      - (e) The slave girl is familiar enough with Peter to rejoice at his escape.
    - (2) Somewhat humorously, the gate of the prison is opened (12:10) while the gate to the house of Christians remains closed (12:14).
      - (a) Some are knocking on heaven’s door in prayer while Peter keeps knocking on their earthly door.
  - iii) The group’s accusatory and skeptical response—12:15-16
    - (1) They accuse Rhoda of being insane or hallucinating.
    - (2) They eventually open the door and lose their own mental composure.
      - (a) Perhaps they assumed the execution had already taken place? We normally assume that they were praying for his release.
      - (b) The answer to their prayers has been knocking on their door. (Craig Keener)
      - (c) Ironically, they are still praying after God has answered their prayers.
  - iv) Peter’s Godward and thoughtful response to their response—12:17
    - (1) He quiets them down, perhaps with the common gesture of the right hand as a fist with the little finger extended.

- (2) He details God's gracious rescue of him from the prison.
- (3) He wants the pastor (Jesus' half-brother James/Jacob) informed as well as the rest of the congregation.
  - (a) Over the past @ 11 years, James has become the leader of the congregation. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12)
  - (b) Note James' prominence as a first-among-equals. (Cf. Acts 15:13-21; 21:18)
  - (c) James writes his letter close to this time. (cf. James 1:1)
  - (d) James is martyred 18 years later in AD 62 by the high priest Annas II.
- (4) He leaves to find an undisclosed place of safety (outside of Jerusalem? Beyond Agrippa's jurisdiction?) as an escaped prisoner.
  - (a) Though the search does not begin until morning, he is concerned for safety for himself but also for the other Christians.
  - (b) While God provides a *miraculous* deliverance from prison by means of an angel, His later protection of Peter is *providential* through human initiative. There is a difference.
  - (c) Perhaps Peter can mingle with the departing Passover crowds.
- (5) Apart from 15:7 which takes place 4-5 years later, Peter now fades from the book of Acts.
- f) What was Herod's response to Peter's deliverance?—12:18-19
  - i) Intense anxiety (consternation) among the Roman soldiers
    - (1) A figure of speech for understatements known as litotes (LI-to-tees).
  - ii) Intense searching of places and interrogation of the guards
    - (1) With all the security precautions taken (chains, doors, rotating guards, etc.), the natural assumption is that the guards assisted Peter's escape. There appears to be no other human explanation. (cf. Acts 5:22-24)
  - iii) Deadly discipline of the (4 or 16?) guards (cf. Acts 16:27)
    - (1) He is willing to lose (up to 16) soldiers to "save face" because he was outwitted (by God) and could not kill Peter.
    - (2) God allows the death of James ben Zebedee, rescues Peter from death, but allows the death of the soldiers. The mystery of Providence.
  - iv) He relocates to the coastal city of Caesarea in God's providential preparation for Agrippa's death.
- 3) **Jesus removes Herod Agrippa I**—12:20-23 (@ spring of AD 44)
  - a) What is Herod's emotional condition?—12:19-20
    - i) Perhaps his anger is connected with the cities and the ongoing famine?
    - ii) Remember Ps. 33:10-11; 76:10.
  - b) The audience responded to Herod's speech in what way?—12:22
    - i) This is (customary) flattery of the worst kind.
    - ii) Cf. the response of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:13-18.
  - c) God responded to Herod's attitude in what way? Why?—12:23
    - i) God will not share His glory with another. (cf. Is. 42:8; Rom. 1:21)

- (1) Agrippa, being a Jew, commits the most fundamental sin that a Jew can commit, violating the first commandment. (Eckhard Schnabel)
- ii) Some type of intestinal worms (tapeworms [up to 30' long], roundworms [10-16" long], etc.)
  - (1) Ironically, Josephus mentions Herod the Great (Agrippa's grandfather) also died in association with worms.
- iii) King Agrippa I dies at the age of @ 54. He was survived by three daughters (including Bernice [Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30] and Drusilla [Acts 24:24]) and one son (Agrippa II [Acts 24:13, 22-24, 26; 26:1-2, 19, 27-28, 32]. Agrippa II rules from AD 48-100.
- d) The righteous apostle was set free, but the unrighteous king was struck by the hand of God. (L. Scott Kellum)

**PROGRESS REPORT # 7—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN CAESAREA AND ANTIOCH—12:24-25**

- 1. CONCERNING GOD'S WORD—12:24 (cf. 6:7; 13:49; 19:20)
  - It spread despite all that Herod Agrippa I intended to accomplish
- 2. CONCERNING GOD'S MESSENGERS—12:25
  - Remember Barnabas and Saul and the offering?—11:29-30
  - John Mark (cf. 12:12) now joins their team.

**Note the following:** (cf. Darrell Bock)

- Luke shifts his focus from the church in Jerusalem and transitions to the church in Antioch.
- Luke concludes the mercy mission from Acts 11.
- Luke shifts attention from Peter to Barnabas and Saul.
- Luke shifts from a primarily Jewish ministry focus to a primarily Gentile ministry focus.

**Question:** while the common Christian appears to have been scattered because of persecution, why are the majority of the apostles still in Jerusalem after @ 16-1/2 years? (cf. Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:27; 11:1; 14:4; 15:2)